

2022-02-16: U.S. media roll-up: "Freedom Convoy" Protest (as of 4:30pmET)

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Date: Wed, 16 Feb 2022 22:14:13 +0000
Attachments: Trucker Protest Rollup 2 (Feb 16).docx (36.07 kB); 2022-02-16 PM - TWITTER SNAPSHOT TRUCKER PROTEST.docx (16.28 kB); IB_WSHDC-#767918-v1-2022-02-16 CONGRESS GOVERNORS reactions.DOCX (13.49 kB); Joint-US-CAN-Governors-and-Premiers-Letter---Federal-Quarantine-and-Vaccine-Mandate-for-Truckers.pdf (369.72 kB)

Articles below (and attached)

ATTACHED: Refreshed twitter snapshot and congressional/state reaction

There is significant social media around the attached [letter](#) released today addressed to President Biden and Prime Minister Trudeau from AB Premier Jason Kenney, SK Premier Scott Moe, and 16 (of 27) U.S. Republican governors. The letter requests each leader "immediately reinstate the vaccine and quarantine exemptions available to cross-border truck drivers," underscoring their concern that "terminating these exemptions has had demonstrably negative impacts on the North American supply chain, the cost of living, and access to essential products for people in both of our countries." Governor DeSantis (R-FL) who has been one of the most vocal leaders on the protest is absent from this list. American signatories include:

Greg Gianforte (R-MT)
Kay Ivey (R-AL)
Mike Dunleavy (R-AK)
Asa Hutchinson (R-AR)

Brian Kemp (R-GA)
Brad Little (R-ID)
Kim Reynolds (R-IA)
Tate Reeves (R-MS)
Mike Parson (R-MO)
Pete Ricketts (R-NE)
Doug Burgum (R-ND)
Henry McMaster (R-SC)
Kristi Noem (R-SD)
Bill Lee (R-TN)
Spencer Cox (R-UT)
Mark Gordon (R-WY)

Abbreviated Articles

Police warn Ottawa protesters to leave or face criminal charges.

New York Times, Dan Bilefsky, Sarah Maslin Nir and Ian Austen, 16 February 2022

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An activist who has advocated secession by western provinces becomes the public face of the Canada protests.

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Canada Police Step Up Warning to Freedom Convoy Protesters

Wall Street Journal, Paul Vieira and Kim Mackrael, 16 February 2022

Ottawa police officers visited hundreds of heavy-duty trucks and other vehicles parked downtown and in front of the national legislature Wednesday, delivering notices to their owners and other protesters demanding they leave a demonstration zone immediately or face arrest and criminal charges.

What Trudeau Can and Can't Do With Emergency Powers

Bloomberg, Brian Platt and Theophilos Argitis, 16 February 2022

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invoked emergency powers to quell protests over coronavirus restrictions that have brought gridlock to Canada's capital and blocked key trade corridors, citing the need to restore public order. It's the first time a federal government has resorted to such powers in five decades.

Ottawa police warn occupiers: 'Leave now'

Politico, Andy Blatchford, 16 February 2022

Police are warning convoy protesters to leave Ottawa or face arrest.

Truckers end US border blockade, siege in Ottawa goes on

Associated Press, Rob Gillies, 16 February 2022

Ottawa police trying to break the nearly three-week siege of the capital by truckers protesting Canada's COVID-19 restrictions began warning Wednesday drivers to leave immediately or risk arrest.

Full Articles

Police warn Ottawa protesters to leave or face criminal charges.

New York Times, Dan Bilefsky, Sarah Maslin Nir and Ian Austen, 16 February 2022

Police on Wednesday ordered protesters clogging Ottawa's streets to leave or face criminal charges, appearing to set the stage for a clampdown on the demonstrations that have roiled the nation's capital for weeks.

"You must leave the area now. Anyone blocking streets, or assisting others in the blocking streets, are committing a criminal offense and you may be arrested," Ottawa Police Service said in a statement and in leaflets handed out to protesters. "You must immediately cease further unlawful activity or you will face charges."

The statement added that anyone coming to Ottawa to join the demonstration would also be breaking the law.

This week, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made his most aggressive move yet, declaring a national emergency aimed at ending the demonstrations that began nearly three weeks ago in the capital of Ottawa to protest vaccine mandates, and have since spread across the country.

His invocation of the Emergencies Act conferred enormous, if temporary, power on the federal government — and was the first time in more than a half-century that a Canadian government had taken such a drastic step.

The police will now be able to seize trucks and other vehicles used in the protests. Demonstrations that "go beyond lawful protest" would be banned, the prime minister said, and the government would formally ban blockades in designated areas like border crossings, airports and the capital.

But Mr. Trudeau and members of his cabinet offered repeated assurance that the act would not be used to suspend "fundamental rights."

After the leaflets were handed out to protesters in Ottawa, a group of them near Parliament Hill asked police officers if they were going to be arrested. "If you're given the order will you follow orders?" one of the protesters asked. Officers responded that for now they were not making arrests.

Denis Brown, 57, who quit his job as a technology service provider because he didn't want to get vaccinated for travel, was circulating his own message on a piece of paper: The politicians should be arrested, it said.

The patience of many Canadians with the protests has grown thinner by the day. The nation's image of serenity and order has given way to scenes of truckers shouting "freedom," honking horns, confronting police and, in some cases, taunting fellow citizens who wear masks.

While most of the protests have been peaceful, the presence of more hard-line elements was underlined this week when four protesters in Alberta on Tuesday were charged with conspiracy to murder police officers, in relation to what the police described as a plan to use violence if officers tried to break up a blockade in Coutts, a village in southern Alberta bordering Montana.

A stockpile of weapons — including 13 long guns, handguns, a machete, multiple sets of body armor, a large quantity of ammunition and magazines — was discovered by the police in trailers in Alberta on Monday. Police said a small protest cell in the province had been prepared to use force to maintain the now-disbanded blockade in Coutts.

Thirteen people were arrested, ranging in age from 18 to 62, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Alberta said in a statement on Tuesday. In addition to charging four with conspiracy to commit murder, the police charged most of the remaining protesters with possession of a weapon and with "mischief" over 5,000 Canadian dollars.

Marco Mendicino, the minister of public safety, said Wednesday that three of the main border crossings previously impeded by protesters — in Coutts, Alberta; Surrey, British Columbia; and the

Ambassador Bridge linking Windsor, Ontario to Detroit — were now open. The Ambassador Bridge is a vital supply route for the global automobile industry.

“For those thinking of coming to Ottawa this weekend, don’t,” Mr. Mendicini said, warning that people who did so would be risking involvement in criminal actions.

Ottawa’s chief of police, Peter Sloly, resigned on Tuesday amid criticism that the police and Mr. Trudeau’s government have been ineffectual and sluggish in stemming the disruptions.

While trucks continue to snarl traffic and disrupt daily life in Ottawa, there have been signs in recent days that the protests and blockades appear to be slowly diminishing. The Ottawa police said on Tuesday afternoon that the number of trucks in the downtown core had shrunk to 360 vehicles compared with more than 400 vehicles earlier in the week while about 150 protesters remained on the streets.

Deputy Chief Patricia Ferguson said the police had so far opened 172 criminal investigations related to the protests, charged 33 people, and issued 3,000 tickets.

“This is not a peaceful protest,” Mr. Trudeau said this week. “The time to go home is now.”

An activist who has advocated secession by western provinces becomes the public face of the Canada protests.

New York Times, Sarah Maslin Nir and Dan Bilefsky, 16 February 2022

She is a former fitness instructor who has sung and played guitar in a band called “Blind Monday” in Medicine Hat, Alberta. She was a senior member of a splinter party that advocated for Canada’s Western provinces to secede from the country.

And now Tamara Lich, 47, has emerged as the public face and the most visible leader of the trucker convoy against pandemic restrictions that has roiled the nation’s capital, shaken the country and prompted Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to take the drastic step of declaring a national public order emergency.

Ms. Lich speaks publicly in measured tones, and has become adept at deploying social media — and her Twitter feed — to amplify the protesters’ grievances.

At a news conference in the Sheraton Ottawa Hotel on Monday, opened to media other than solely conservative-leaning news outlets for one of the first times, there was an air of gravitas in a room that echoed with the constant coughing of dozens of maskless supporters.

Wearing or not wearing a mask has become a potent political statement during the protests and some Ottawa residents have complained of being taunted by protesters.

“Some of you might oppose our grievances,” Ms. Lich said to the television cameras. Like other members of the movement, she does not wear a mask. “However, democratic society will always have non-trivial disagreements, and righteous dissidents,” she added.

What message discipline exists in the protest movement has come from Ms. Lich, said Jay Hill, the interim leader of the Maverick Party, a small right-of-center group based out of Calgary, Alberta, created to promote the separation of Canada’s three western Prairie Provinces from the rest of the country. Ms. Lich, who worked previously in the energy sector, has deep ties to the group.

Even before the convoy assembled, its messaging was Ms. Lich’s preoccupation, according to Mr. Hill, who said she called him several times even before arriving in Ottawa to strategize.

"We had a number of discussions about staying on message, about the need in this modern-day world of politics to have a very clearly defined message that is understandable and simple, a message that people can grasp hold of and run with," he said. "Tamara clearly understands that."

Ms. Lich played a leading role in organizing a GoFundMe campaign for the protests that raised \$7.8 million before the crowdfunding site shut it down after receiving "police reports of violence and other unlawful activity," GoFundMe said.

B.J. Dichter, an official spokesman for the convoy, said he joined the effort after Ms. Lich sought help managing the swell of donations flowing into a GoFundMe page. Mr. Dichter has a history of spouting anti-Islamist views and once said that "political Islam" is "rotting away at our society like syphilis." He has rejected claims of racism.

Within the occupiers' tightly managed ground operations, there are military hallmarks, outlined and executed by the several higher-ups who have backgrounds in the armed forces and law enforcement, according to leading members of the group.

Their organization includes oversight of each occupied street by a so-called road captain, with sections divided and overseen by block captains who operate below them.

Before becoming a prominent face of the protests, Ms. Lich was a personal trainer in Medicine Hat, a town once dubbed "Hell's Basement," by Rudyard Kipling for its location on top of huge natural gas field.

Zach Smithson, an employee at Body Building Depot Fitness Emporium, where Ms. Lich used to work, said she has become the talk of the town.

"I think we are all very proud of her," he said.

Ms. Lich did not respond to a call and text message requesting an interview.

"I'm Jewish," he told the journalist Rupa Subramanya. "I have family in mass graves in Europe. And apparently I'm a white supremacist."

Canada Police Step Up Warning to Freedom Convoy Protesters

Wall Street Journal, Paul Vieira and Kim Mackrael, 16 February 2022

Ottawa police officers visited hundreds of heavy-duty trucks and other vehicles parked downtown and in front of the national legislature Wednesday, delivering notices to their owners and other protesters demanding they leave a demonstration zone immediately or face arrest and criminal charges.

"You must leave the area now," the notice from Ottawa police said.

"Anyone blocking streets, or assisting others in the blocking [of] streets, are committing a criminal offence and you may be arrested."

The official police warning is an escalation in law-enforcement efforts to end the 20-day protest, which has demanded that Canada immediately rescind all Covid-19 vaccine mandates and related social restrictions. The protest has inspired blockades at some crucial U.S.-Canada border crossings and prompted Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to invoke emergency powers aimed at ending the demonstrations.

A cabinet order said the protests in downtown Ottawa and at border crossings constitute a public-order emergency because of the threat of violence and unrest, and the disruption caused to the supply-chain network and two-way trade with the U.S. Canada's top security official said Tuesday a small group behind the demonstrations poses a serious threat to public safety.

Ottawa police, in its notice, said that with the new powers made available under the federal emergency order, it is now illegal for new protesters or their supporters to enter downtown Ottawa and join the demonstration. Police also said drivers' licenses could be revoked, per a separate emergency order from the province of Ontario.

Also Wednesday, the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa put out a notice urging parents at the Ottawa demonstration to make arrangements in case they become unable to care for their children after police intervene. The agency said it would work to reunite families as soon as possible if parents and children are separated "following police efforts in ending the demonstration."

The notices from police and the children's aid society suggest law-enforcement officials are ready to move against the protesters, according to a former senior Canadian police commander. "This really is the last step of talking, and warning," Chris Lewis, former commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police, told CTV News. "At some point, this push has to come to shove."

Speaking to reporters Wednesday morning, Mr. Trudeau said decisions about dealing with the protesters would be left to the police. He said the emergency measures invoked, through the Emergencies Act, provide the police tools they can use "to actually make sure that laws are enforced in a proportional way."

Elsewhere in Canada, Royal Canadian Mounted Police said they were successful in ending a trucker-led blockade at a border crossing connecting Manitoba with North Dakota. At its peak, RCMP said, 75 trucks were involved in the protest. Police said they were able to negotiate with protesters and they agreed to leave, with no arrests.

One problem police have faced in ending the protests is resistance from tow-truck drivers. Canadian tow-truck operators say they have received intimidating phone calls and texts from supporters of a trucker-led protest in Ottawa, warning them of consequences should they help police.

Senior Canadian officials said this week the absence of tow trucks has impaired police efforts to bring the protest to an end. The emergency powers invoked by the Canadian government give law-enforcement officers the authority to compel tow-truck operators to remove vehicles.

"Tow-truck operators and companies have been either threatened or intimidated. So it has been very difficult for police," a senior Canadian official told reporters in a late Tuesday briefing. With the new powers available to law enforcement, the official said, "police would then talk to [tow-truck owners], and ensure that they understand...the urgency of the situation."

Most Ottawa-area tow-truck operators contacted Wednesday declined to comment. Those who did speak said they are uncomfortable being caught in a struggle between police and the protesters.

"I think we've been put in an unfair situation," said Ibrahim Masri, chief executive of Alliance Towing, which operates in the Ottawa area with five trucks. "We're just a small business...and we're dealing with federal issues. And our position is, it's like, damned if you do and damned if you don't."

He said his company has received harassing calls from protest supporters and opponents, and he is worried about the safety of his drivers and damage to the vehicles. "That puts my staff, my company in jeopardy. If we do tow, is someone going to show up at our office? You know, is someone going to vandalize our trucks?" he said. "It's an unfair situation."

Trudeau Anti-Protest Law Sweeps Across Canada Financial Sector

Bloomberg, Kevin Orland and Brian Platt, 16 February 2022

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's emergency orders aimed at cutting off funds to protesters have cast a wide net across the Canadian financial industry, forcing portfolio managers and securities firms to take a harder look at who they are doing business with.

The new rules make demands of a broad list of entities -- including banks, investment firms, credit unions, loan companies, securities dealers, fundraising platforms, insurance companies and fraternal benefit societies. They must determine whether they're in "possession or control of property" of a person who's attending an illegal protest or providing supplies to demonstrators, according to orders published by the government late Tuesday night.

If they find such a person in their customer list, they must freeze their accounts and report it to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or Canada's intelligence service, the regulations say. Any suspicious transactions must also be reported to the country's anti-money-laundering agency, known as Fintrac.

"I think this caught everyone off guard last night when it was released," Greg Taylor, chief investment officer of fund manager Purpose Investments Inc., said on BNN Bloomberg Television. "There's a lot of questions right now in figuring out who we're targeting, what do we have to look at."

Trudeau's government invoked emergency powers on Monday, saying his government needed to choke off money to demonstrators who've blocked border crossings and have now been parked in downtown Ottawa for 20 days, refusing to leave. The protesters are demanding an end to vaccine mandates and other Covid-19 restrictions.

The invocation of the emergency powers, which also gives the government the power to ban public assembly in some locations, has prompted fiery debate among legislators and concerns that the government is overreaching in its bid to quell protests that have paralyzed the nation's capital.

MORE: What Trudeau Can and Can't Do With Emergency Powers: QuickTake

Trudeau has said the measures will be temporary, targeted and are "reasonable and proportionate" to the threats the country faces.

Caldwell Securities, an investment-advisory firm that operates in Ontario, hasn't received any communication from the government or law enforcement, nor a list of people whose accounts it's supposed to freeze, Chairman Thomas Caldwell said Wednesday.

Caldwell said he doesn't know how exactly his firm would go about enforcing the measures and he would seek outside legal advice before making any such move. The emergency rules are "posturing" on the part of the government, meant to frighten protesters enough to clear the current demonstrations, he said.

"If this thing is to be implemented, it will begin and end at the banking level," Caldwell said in an interview. "I can't see it getting down to our level. I would be quite surprised."

The new regulations say the act doesn't apply to insurance policies and that people who suffer injury or damage as a result of the order may apply for compensation. The order also gives the government the power to designate certain areas as "secure protected places, including critical infrastructure."

Financial institutions will be protected against lawsuits for actions they take under the emergency order, the government says.

The order also says governments are taking new authority to "share relevant information with banks and other financial services providers, if the information will help put a stop to the funding of illegal blockades and illegal activities." That applies not just to the federal government but provinces and territories, according to a statement from the finance department.

"I think compliance officers are going to be busy today figuring out what this means," Taylor said.

What Trudeau Can and Can't Do With Emergency Powers

Bloomberg, Brian Platt and Theophilos Argitis, 16 February 2022

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invoked emergency powers to quell protests over coronavirus restrictions that have brought gridlock to Canada's capital and blocked key trade corridors, citing the need to restore public order. It's the first time a federal government has resorted to such powers in five decades.

1. What powers does the act give Trudeau?

The Emergencies Act invoked by the prime minister provides the federal government with broad powers to prohibit public assembly, mobilize police, order private companies to provide essential services and mandate financial institutions to freeze accounts. In this instance, Trudeau is using all of these powers against the trucker-led protests. He's banned public assemblies that can "reasonably be expected to lead to a breach of the peace" around parliamentary buildings and other government buildings, critical infrastructure, war memorials and "any other place as designated by the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness." He's also mandating banks and other financial institutions to freeze accounts of individuals participating in the protest, while choking off funding to the organizers.

2. What does it mean to be able to commandeer services?

One problem authorities have had to deal with is a reluctance by towing companies to assist with the removal of vehicles and semi-trailers that have been used in the blockades. The tow truck companies are worried about damage to their equipment or retribution from protesters. These orders will compel them under threat of fines or jail time to assist the police. The federal government is similarly "commandeering" banks and insurers by forcing them to stop providing services to protesters.

3. What is the government doing about funds raised for the protests?

There have been two large crowdfunders for the protests, one through GoFundMe Inc. and one through GiveSendGo LLC. GoFundMe chose to cancel its C\$10-million (\$7.9 million) fundraiser after officials provided evidence it was being used to commit crimes. The protesters started a new one on GiveSendGo and raised a similar amount, but Ontario's provincial government obtained a court order to prohibit any banks or payment processors from allowing the funds to be distributed.

4. How extensive are the financial measures?

The measures apply to the full breadth of the nation's financial sector, whether federally regulated or not: foreign banks, credit unions, insurers, trusts, loan companies, security firms, portfolio managers, payment facilities and crowdfunding platforms. These companies must cease dealing in any way with individuals involved in illegal protests, including providing any access to digital currencies. Effectively, anyone deemed participating in these public assemblies will become de-banked. In addition, companies involved in crowdfunding or other electronic payment platforms will need to register with Canada's financial intelligence agency.

5. What powers is Trudeau providing to police?

Police are getting additional tools to get what is now deemed unlawful assembly under control. Officers have the ability to prevent supplies of everything from food to fuel (which is needed to keep vehicles and tents warm in freezing temperatures). Police can block anyone attempting to travel to or enter the area, and arrest those who refuse to comply. The government is also prohibiting anyone from bringing children to the protest, a reflection of the fact children are known to be sleeping in some of the trailers on site. What the government won't be doing is sending the military to help, as officials have said it would unnecessarily escalate the situation and that police have the proper training to make arrests.

5. Is there any check on emergency powers?

The emergency orders are made under legislation passed in 1988 that brought in many more safeguards than had previously existed for the use of such extraordinary powers. Before invoking the act, the prime minister must consult with the provincial governments whose territory will be impacted, and the orders must be put to parliament within seven days for a vote. The orders need to be renewed every 30 days and a parliamentary committee conducts oversight while they're in effect. When the emergency ends, the government is required to launch a public inquiry into the events.

7. Why is Trudeau doing this?

There are two main reasons. One is that the Ottawa police have been incapable of getting the streets under control in the capital city, declaring they don't have enough resources. However the police chief -- who resigned his post on Tuesday -- has also been blamed for being too passive in his response to the protest. The other reason is that parallel blockades have popped up at border crossings, cutting off critical trade routes. The government wants to prevent and quickly clear any future blockades.

8. What has the reaction been?

Although there is significant support in Canada for rolling back Covid-19 restrictions, public support for the trucker protests has dwindled as the blockades drag on. An Angus Reid Institute poll released Monday found 72% of Canadians want the protesters to "go home" as they've made their point, and 22% want them to stay. The federal government has been criticized for its inaction on the protests, but some now say Trudeau has overreached in using emergency powers. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association said the situation has not reached the "high and clear standard" needed to justify such sweeping measures.

9. Has anything like this happened before?

The closest recent example of this is the 1970 October Crisis, in which the prime minister's father, Pierre Trudeau, invoked the War Measures Act in response to a kidnapping and bombing campaign by Quebec separatists. The military was called in to support the police. In effect this was martial law, where anyone could be arrested and detained without a warrant. The current emergency powers act was designed to be less draconian and subject to parliamentary oversight.

Ottawa police warn occupiers: 'Leave now'

Politico, Andy Blatchford, 16 February 2022

Police are warning convoy protesters to leave Ottawa or face arrest.

But so far there are no signs that hundreds of semi trailers, tractors and pickups clogging the capital city's downtown core are willing to budge.

In one act of defiance, a group of demonstrators started roasting a pig in the middle of a major downtown street as the police warning came down.

Officers moved through the streets around Parliament Hill on Wednesday morning distributing flyers — one side English, one side French — warning of the consequences.

"Anyone blocking streets, or assisting others in the blocking [of] streets, are committing a criminal offense and you may be arrested," the leaflet reads. "You must immediately cease further unlawful activity or you will face charges."

The action comes on Day 20 of the occupation that has captured global headlines and inspired similar protests in Brussels and beyond.

Engines continue to rumble, diesel fumes still fill the air and many protesters, undaunted, are spending the lunch hour eating in makeshift mess halls that dot the area.

"It could be a bluff. It could be just scare tactics," protester Todd Boutilier told POLITICO. "We're not going anywhere. We're holding the line. The whole world's watching right now."

Ottawa's police chief Peter Sloly resigned Tuesday afternoon against fierce criticism that he had failed to respond decisively to the crisis. He was replaced by interim chief Steve Bell who has promised to end the occupation.

Earlier this week, the Liberal government invoked the never-before-used Emergencies Act, which they've described as a tool to strengthen and support police at all levels. The act also designates "protected places" where public assembly is prohibited if it "may reasonably be expected to lead to a breach of the peace."

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Monday that measures will be targeted and time-limited.

The emergency measures, which came into effect Tuesday, expire 30 days after they come into force. Justice Minister David Lametti told reporters Monday that Ottawa hopes to revoke the measures "much sooner."

Canada's Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino hinted Tuesday that tolerance with the status quo in downtown neighborhoods was no longer an option.

"No one wants to see another weekend like the last three on Wellington Street," he said of the roadway at the foot of Parliament Hill now blocked by semis and host to three weeks of protest, dance parties and almost non-stop truck horns.

Truckers end US border blockade, siege in Ottawa goes on

Associated Press, Rob Gillies, 16 February 2022

Ottawa police trying to break the nearly three-week siege of the capital by truckers protesting Canada's COVID-19 restrictions began warning Wednesday drivers to leave immediately or risk arrest.

As tensions there rose, protesters at the last remaining truck blockade along the U.S. border — at Emerson, Manitoba — moved out, and authorities reopened the crossing into North Dakota, police said.

In Ottawa, authorities in yellow "police liaison" vests went from rig to rig, knocking on the doors of the trucks parked outside Parliament, to serve notice to the truckers that they could also lose their licenses and see their vehicles seized under Canada's Emergencies Act.

Police also began ticketing vehicles.

Some truckers ripped up the order, and one protester shouted, "I will never go home!" Some threw the warning into a toilet put out on the street. Protesters sat in their trucks and defiantly honked their horns in a chorus that echoed loudly downtown.

At least one trucker pulled away from Parliament Hill.

There was no immediate word from police on when or if they might move in to clear the hundreds of trucks by force. But protest leaders braced for action on Wednesday.

"If it means that I need to go to prison, if I need to be fined in order to allow freedom to be restored in this country — millions of people have given far more for their freedom," said David Paisley, who traveled to Ottawa with a friend who is a truck driver.

Marie Eye, of Victoriaville, Quebec, who has been making soup for the protesters, said the warnings were "just a piece of paper" and doubted police had the manpower to remove the rigs or the protesters.

The warnings came just days after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invoked the emergency law.

Since late January, protesters in trucks and other vehicles have jammed the streets of the capital and obstructed border crossings, decrying vaccine mandates for cross-border truckers and other COVID-19 precautions and condemning Trudeau's Liberal government.

The protests have drawn support from right-wing extremists and have been cheered on and received donations from conservatives in the U.S., triggering complaints in some quarters about America being a bad influence on Canada.

As the crisis appeared to heat up in Ottawa, the premiers of two Canadian provinces and 16 U.S. governors sent a letter to Trudeau and U.S. President Joe Biden calling on them to end their nations' requirements that truckers crossing the border be vaccinated.

The bumper-to-bumper demonstrations by the so-called Freedom Convoy have infuriated many Ottawa residents, who have complained of being harassed and intimidated on the clogged streets.

Police in Ottawa were optimistic they could gain control in the coming days after Trudeau invoked the Emergencies Act on Monday.

Over the past weeks, authorities have hesitated to move against the protesters around the country, citing in some cases a lack of manpower and fears of violence.

Trudeau's decision came amid growing frustration with government inaction. Ottawa Police Chief Peter Sloly lost his job this week after he failed to move decisively against the demonstrators.

As of Tuesday, Ottawa officials said 360 vehicles remained involved in the blockade in the city's core, down from a high of roughly 4,000.

"They don't want to give this up because this is their last stand, their last main hub," said Michael Kempa, a criminology professor at the University of Ottawa.

Even after the warnings, a few protesters roasted a pig on the street in front of Parliament, and a child played with blocks in a small playground area on a road lined with trucks.

An Ottawa child welfare agency advised parents at the demonstration to arrange for someone to take care of their children in the event of a police crackdown. Some protesters had their youngsters with them.

Police in the capital appeared to be following the playbook that authorities used over the weekend to break the blockade at the economically vital Ambassador Bridge connecting Windsor, Ontario, to Detroit. Police there handed out leaflets informing protesters they risked arrest.

After many of those demonstrators left and the protest had dwindled, police moved in and made dozens of arrests. The blockade there had disrupted the flow of goods between the two countries and forced the auto industry on both sides to curtail production.

From: Lambo, Pam -WSHDC -WS -PA

Sent: February 16, 2022 11:32 AM

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Subject: 2022-02-16: U.S. media roll-up: "Freedom Convoy" Protest (as of 11:30amET)

Articles below (and attached)

ATTACHED: Twitter snapshot and congressional reaction

Significant media coverage by the Washington Post (see below) following their editorial board's support of Canada's decision to invoke The Emergencies Act. One of the more interesting articles is by foreign affairs correspondent Claire Parker about the "silent majority" of Canadian truck drivers who have been "working day and night" and distancing themselves from the "vocal minority" of trucker protestors. Her article notes "About a third of Canada's roughly 180,000 tractor-trailer drivers are immigrants, according to the most recent survey, in 2016". Another Washington Post article provides deeper analysis on the source of US funding to GoSendGo, citing that "Residents in wealthy enclaves across the United States — from Beverly Hills, Calif., to suburbs of Austin, to Florida beach communities — sent millions of dollars" to support the protests. The article also notes that donors were a mix of Republican and Democratic supporters. The Wall Street Journal's front page, above the fold headline (with photo of trucks in Ottawa) is *Standoff with Protesters Intensifies in Canada's Capital*. Geraldo Rivera on FOX News — the only network correspondent speaking out against the protest — had a heated argument with colleague Sean Hannity who insisted that Geraldo apologize for not supporting the protestors.

Abbreviated Articles

Which U.S. communities sent money to support the Canadian trucker protests?

Washington Post, Aaron C. Davis, Andrew Ba Tran, and Dalton Bennett, 15 February 2022
Residents in wealthy enclaves across the United States — from Beverly Hills, Calif., to suburbs of Austin, to Florida beach communities — sent millions of dollars to support trucker convoys that occupied the Canadian capital and shut down commerce at key border crossings between the two nations, according to a Washington Post analysis of leaked fundraising data posted online over the past 48 hours.

Canadian truck drivers distance themselves from 'Freedom Convoy' protests

Washington Post, Claire Parker, 16 February 2022
In just a matter of weeks, Canadian truck drivers protesting coronavirus vaccine mandates became the unexpected darlings of the global right wing.

Canada eyeing 'no-go' zones in Ottawa to quell 'Freedom Convoy' protests, official says

Washington Post, Ellen Francis and Andrew Jeong, 16 February 2022
Canadian authorities say never-before-used emergency powers will now allow them to establish "no-go" zones in the capital, Ottawa, where protesters against pandemic restrictions from the self-styled "Freedom Convoy" remained defiant in the face of a tightening crackdown.

Opinion: Justin Trudeau's move to end the trucker protest was risky but correct

Washington Post, Editorial Board, 15 February 2022

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is justified in invoking an emergency law enabling enhanced government powers to end the protest that has paralyzed the capital city of Ottawa, savaged public order and inflicted significant damage on the world's 10th-largest economy.

Behind the Fractious Collaboration Steering the Canada Protests

New York Times, Sarah Maslin Nir and Natalie Kitroeff, 15 February 2022

Since the big rigs entrenched in the core of Canada's capital first pulled in nearly three weeks ago, they have arranged themselves in a semblance of order, parking in evenly spaced rows. Their drivers have stayed warm and are fed by a corps of marshaled volunteers, and though they have varying personal beliefs, they appear carefully on-message: "Freedom!" has been the repeated refrain for the past 19 days.

'Freedom Convoy' Protesters in Canada's Capital City Dig In After Tougher Measures

Wall Street Journal, Paul Vieira and Kim Mackrael, 15 February 2022

The Canadian government on Tuesday defended its decision to invoke unusual emergency powers to quell protests that have paralyzed the capital for 19 days, with the country's top security official calling a small group behind the current demonstrations a serious threat.

Full Articles**Which U.S. communities sent money to support the Canadian trucker protests?**

Washington Post, Aaron C. Davis, Andrew Ba Tran, and Dalton Bennett, 15 February 2022

Residents in wealthy enclaves across the United States — from Beverly Hills, Calif., to suburbs of Austin, to Florida beach communities — sent millions of dollars to support trucker convoys that occupied the Canadian capital and shut down commerce at key border crossings between the two nations, according to a Washington Post analysis of leaked fundraising data posted online over the past 48 hours.

The richer an American community was, the more likely residents there were to donate, and the biggest number of contributions often came from communities where registered Republicans made up solid majorities, according to the review of more than 55,000 U.S.-based donations through the Christian fundraising website GiveSendGo. The site, which had suffered multiple security breaches over the past year, emerged as a fundraising magnet early this month after the better-known online fundraising platform, GoFundMe, stopped accepting donations for the convoy. GoFundMe pulled away after saying the occupation born out of opposition to vaccine requirements for truckers violated its policies.

Hackers began to extract the information about donors to the controversial protest shortly after the Super Bowl began Sunday evening, the site's co-founder Jacob Wells told The Post in an interview. Someone posing as a donor was able to make changes that gave the intruder administrative powers. The hack did not necessarily reveal donors' identities, he said, because users are not required to give a real name or authentic email address to send money. But the site requires a donor to supply a zip code when making a credit card transaction to guard against fraud, Wells said, thereby revealing the locations of nearly all U.S. contributors.

"It's true, this was a campaign funded almost entirely by Canadians and Americans," Wells said. "And it's not over, we're pursuing every legal means to continue to get the money where donors intend it to go."

At the request of Canadian authorities, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice issued an order Thursday halting the distribution of money from GiveSendGo fundraisers, which were organized under the names "Freedom Convoy 2022" and "Adopt-a-Trucker."

The hacked data from the Freedom Convoy campaign was shared Monday by the nonprofit leak publisher Distributed Denial of Secrets, which provided the data to journalists and researchers. The group released a second set of data Tuesday showing contributions to the “Adopt-a-Trucker” campaign.

Combined, the two data sets contained 100,316 donations totaling \$8,961,973. Nearly 52 percent of the money came from residents in Canada. Almost 42 percent — and the largest overall number of contributions — came from the United States.

“I am not surprised at the slightest in regard to this information being leaked,” Elena Danielson, a Beverly Hills real estate agent, wrote in an email to The Post when asked about leaked data showing a \$100 donation associated with her name and an email address related to her company.

In a series of emails, Danielson, 57, said she grew up in the Soviet Union, emigrated to Canada in the 1990s and then moved to the United States, where she is married and has grandchildren. Danielson, a Canadian American, said she was vaccinated when it became a condition for international travel but now is ashamed of what she sees as draconian mandates in her adopted nation to the north.

“I support the vaccine. I am glad that everyone who needed or wanted it is vaccinated. But now we all know that the vaccination status does not prevent from getting it again or spreading covid. My husband just had it for the second time after getting a booster,” Danielson said, adding: “If [Canadian Prime Minister] Justin Trudeau was a true leader, he would admit to being wrong and lift the useless mandates.”

Similarly, Nancy Vasa of eastern Oregon donated to the Freedom Convoy, sending \$2,000 through GiveSendGo on Feb. 5. In a place to add a note with the contribution, the 62-year-old Vasa wrote that she sees the danger to liberty closer to home: “May God bless our truckers for saving our freedom!”

Asked about the donation and the message that accompanied it, Vasa wrote in an email to The Post: “I believe that we are falling off the cliff to communism and the people rising up could be our last chance to get Americans to fight for our freedoms.” A registered Republican who became active in politics during the Trump presidency, Vasa added that she believes “the vaccine mandates are part of a mass murder by Big Pharma.”

Not all contributions from the United States were made by Republicans, according to leaked data that The Post compared with public records and voter registration data.

Nearly a third of the donations came from zip codes where Democrats outnumber Republicans, according to voter registration records. In Brooklyn The Post sent emails to an actor and a retired pastor who are registered Democrats and whose names and email addresses appeared to be associated with donations to the convoy campaigns. An active member of the Green Party there also appeared to give \$50. None of the three returned emails seeking comment.

One donation of \$50 to the Freedom Convoy campaign used an email address associated with the Delaware Transit Corp. The payment made on Feb. 9 under the name of the state transit agency’s chief operating officer, Richard Paprcka, included the message “God Bless you all, need your spirit here in the US!”

An official from the Delaware Transit Corp. and a spokesperson for Gov. John Carney (D) declined to comment when contacted by The Post. Paprcka did not respond to a request for comment sent to the email listed in the donation.

Across the South, contributions were often clustered, such as in the beach communities of Fernandina Beach and Amelia Island. There, a \$350 donation appeared associated with the name and email address for George Leing, a former top lawyer in the Commerce Department under President Donald Trump. He did not respond to an email, and there was no answer at a phone number listed for him.

Within a couple mile radius, 28 others donated, many \$100 or more. Dozens of contributions also flowed from Green Cove Springs, a community south of Jacksonville. Florida overall had the third-highest number of contributors and total donations.

Rebecca Walser confirmed she donated \$5,000 on Feb. 6 to the Freedom Convoy fundraising campaign using a Tampa Bay-area zip code for the payment. "I'm anti-mandate libertarian," Walser told The Post in a brief email.

Two of the biggest pockets of donors nationwide were centered to the north in Marietta and Roswell, Ga. To the west, Leander, Tex., a suburb north of Austin, had the highest number of overall donations with 38 individual contributors. Many included references to Bible verses in notes explaining their donations. A shop owner there declined to comment on a \$100 donation when reached by The Post.

Only a handful of contributors gave more than \$10,000 apiece.

Most were Canadian and defended their decisions in emails to The Post, calling the protest historic and fundamental to Canadians' rights to free speech.

The largest single contributor to the convoy from the United States appears to have been Thomas Siebel, who made a fortune in software development in Silicon Valley in the 1990s. A donation of \$90,000 was made in Siebel's name and using an email address associated with his past business, Siebel Systems.

The donation was not marked anonymous, and was published last week by supporters of the truckers. Siebel did not return an email seeking comment, nor did he return an email and message left with his assistant.

Canadian truck drivers distance themselves from 'Freedom Convoy' protests

Washington Post, Claire Parker, 16 February 2022

In just a matter of weeks, Canadian truck drivers protesting coronavirus vaccine mandates became the unexpected darlings of the global right wing.

Republican politicians showered the truckers, who descended on the Canadian capital, with praise. Copycat convoys gathered from New Zealand to France.

The protests against U.S. and Canadian regulations barring unvaccinated truck drivers from crossing the border began Jan. 28 — and soon attracted a range of anti-government activists, far-right figures and opponents of pandemic restrictions more broadly

But even as the vocal group of truckers, known as the "Freedom Convoy," grabbed the world's attention, many of Canada's truck drivers were scrambling to distance themselves from the movement, which they view as radical and fringe.

In their view, the protesters' actions — including shutting down cross-border trade and laying siege to the capital — have hurt rather than helped drivers in the industry, and failed to advance the labor issues most truckers care about. They point out that only a small percentage of Canadian truckers have joined the demonstrations, and the vast majority of drivers are already vaccinated, according to trucking associations and Canadian authorities.

"There is a vocal minority, which is trying to steal the headlines, but a silent majority has actually been working day and night," said Manan Gupta, publisher of Road Today, a Canadian magazine for South Asian truckers. About a third of Canada's roughly 180,000 tractor-trailer drivers are immigrants, according to the most recent survey, in 2016.

The protests have caused long delays at the border and forced drivers to take lengthy detours. Such disruptions are “not received well” by truckers who are not participating in the convoy, Gupta said, adding that “they are the ones keeping our supply chain intact and running.”

“These illegal blockades have had a detrimental impact on our members and customers’ businesses. These have also had a very significant negative impact upon our professional driving community,” the president of the Canadian Trucking Alliance, Stephen Laskowski, said in a statement Monday.

The roadblocks hampered trade with the United States and forced American auto companies to scale back production, prompting the White House to call last week for the swift reopening of transportation routes.

Canadian police cleared the blockade of the Ambassador Bridge, a vital border crossing linking Detroit to Windsor, Ontario, on Sunday night. And on Monday, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invoked the country’s Emergencies Act, which grants the government sweeping powers to respond to national emergencies. The Canadian Trucking Alliance came out in support of the move.

Some of the convoy’s most visible leaders aren’t even truckers. And at the demonstrations, Confederate flags and pro-Trump signs have mingled alongside the Canadian maple leaf emblem. Money has also poured in from donors in the United States.

James Bauder is one prominent figure and leader of the fringe group Canada Unity, which is well known for peddling conspiracy theories. Action4Canada, which sent vehicles and members to join the convoy, also promotes on its website the unfounded claim that Bill Gates wants to use the vaccine to implant microchips in humans.

“They are using our name in the wrong place and the wrong time,” said Ajay Singh Toor, spokesman for Canada’s West Coast Trucking Association. “It’s not a trucker convoy anymore.”

As a result, the convoy’s demands run the gamut from the removal of all public health measures to Trudeau’s ouster. Teamsters Canada, a union that represents 15,000 long-haul truck drivers, called the convoy a “despicable display of hate lead by the political Right and shamefully encouraged by elected conservative politicians.”

The movement “does not reflect the values of Teamsters Canada, nor the vast majority of our members, and in fact has served to delegitimize the real concerns of most truck drivers today,” the union said in a statement last week.

Issues such as wage theft, bad roads and a lack of restrooms are far more pressing issues for most truckers than vaccine mandates, trucking associations say. But convoy protesters haven’t raised them.

Manbir Bharj drives a crane truck in Ontario and says that the vaccine mandates imposed by the U.S. and Canadian governments on truckers were “fair” because they helped mitigate the spread of the virus.

“This is why the virus is spreading and mutating into different variants — because people don’t know how to follow” rules, Bharj said.

Some worry that the damage to the industry may be hard to reverse. The convoy threatens to exacerbate a labor shortage that already plagued Canadian trucking before the coronavirus hit, Gupta said. About 23,000 truck driver jobs need to be filled, according to a January report by Trucking HR Canada.

“These protests, these blockages, they’re not creating a positive workplace for anybody who wants to embrace trucking,” Gupta said.

Matthew Marchand is a tanker-trailer driver from Ottawa who transports liquid bulk chemicals between Canada and the United States. He is vaccinated but wasn't fully supportive of the mandate, which he said didn't really give truckers a "true choice."

"But how [the protesters] are going about it, to me, is not acceptable," he said. "The negative reputation that they've created for us isn't going to do us any favors with the public's perception of our industry. We already have a hard enough time as it is."

Driver Ted McNeill told CityNews Toronto last week that he had to take a five-hour detour to deliver a truckload of food into Canada.

He had a similar message for the protesting truckers: "Stop it. You're making us look bad."

Canada eyeing 'no-go' zones in Ottawa to quell 'Freedom Convoy' protests, official says

Washington Post, Ellen Francis and Andrew Jeong, 16 February 2022

Canadian authorities say never-before-used emergency powers will now allow them to establish "no-go" zones in the capital, Ottawa, where protesters against pandemic restrictions from the self-styled "Freedom Convoy" remained defiant in the face of a tightening crackdown.

Soon after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invoked the Emergencies Act, officials said they made progress in dispersing protests that disrupted cross-border trade. The blockades at U.S.-Canada border crossings were down to their last holdouts, with supply routes almost clear as police arrested dozens of people — charging a few with conspiracy to commit murder after announcing the seizure of weapons at one location.

Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino said the new measures, outlined Tuesday, would allow law enforcement to quell unrest in Ottawa's downtown, where the protests against pandemic restrictions — which have also focused on Trudeau's administration — have upended daily life.

The actions could include declaring "certain zones that are adjacent to critical infrastructure like borders, like our national symbols including legislatures, like war monuments ... as a no go zone," the minister said at a news conference. The emergency declaration helps resolve questions about the authority to take such steps, he added, though it has been criticized as a threat to civil liberties.

Big rigs and other vehicles still jammed major thoroughfares in the city, with protesters buzzing around Parliament after the Emergencies Act, passed in 1988, was invoked in response to a crisis that has rippled across the country. In Ottawa, which has seen monuments such as the National War Memorial defaced, police said they made 18 arrests, launched dozens of investigations and issued more than 3,000 tickets.

Ottawa's acting deputy police chief, Trish Ferguson, said the number of protesters downtown had fallen below 150, with fewer vehicles clogging the streets. Ferguson said police were waiting "for official details before operationalizing" the Emergencies Act.

The comments came after Ottawa Police Chief Peter Sloly resigned Tuesday over backlash to what was seen as a lax response from authorities to the demonstrations now in their third week.

Canadian officials said they cleared more crossings on the border with the United States after reopening the Ambassador Bridge, the busiest land crossing and a key trade artery connecting Windsor, Ontario, to Detroit.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Alberta said four men were charged with conspiracy to commit murder near the Coutts border crossing, which they said was clear, with traffic "moving slowly." Another crossing in British Columbia was also announced as open, while authorities in Manitoba said

they had reached a “resolution” with demonstrators cutting off the Emerson crossing and expected them to clear out Wednesday.

In Alberta, as a line of trucks left the blockade, plastered with Canadian flags and signs reading “END ALL MANDATES,” some protesters told local media they packed up because news of the weapons discovery conflicted with their message. “It’s too bad that we have to leave, but everybody did really their best,” protester Martina Van Hierden told Canada’s Global TV.

Under rules the government published Tuesday, authorities said they can ban public assemblies that “may reasonably be expected to lead to a breach of the peace” and “designate and secure protected places, including critical infrastructure,” which includes trade corridors and international border crossings.

The measures also allow officials to remove vehicles, equipment or structures that are part of a blockade “anywhere in Canada” and grant the power to “require any crowdfunding platform and payment processor” to report transactions to financial authorities.

Opinion: Justin Trudeau’s move to end the trucker protest was risky but correct

Washington Post, Editorial Board, 15 February 2022

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is justified in invoking an emergency law enabling enhanced government powers to end the protest that has paralyzed the capital city of Ottawa, savaged public order and inflicted significant damage on the world’s 10th-largest economy.

The prime minister’s unprecedented decision to use the Emergencies Act is also risky, as Mr. Trudeau clearly understands. Some of the protesters, whose ranks include an array of extremists, have signaled through intimidation, threats and aggressive conduct that they do not intend to leave Ottawa without a fight.

Mr. Trudeau will have to tread carefully to avoid giving them one. He has already wisely ruled out deploying the military to unclog the city’s streets, which have been paralyzed since late January with tractor-trailers, blaring their horns and rumbling on diesel fuel. Nonetheless, among other expanded powers, the emergency law grants his government the right to compel towing companies to remove the trucks, which some had said they were reluctant to do. The potential for violence is real.

Perhaps as useful as tow trucks, or more so, Canadian officials also say they will use the law to freeze corporate and individual bank accounts; suspend vehicle insurance; and crack down on crowdfunding and cryptocurrency sites, which have enabled the protesters to raise more than \$10 million in barely three weeks, a chunk of it from donors in the United States.

The protest, which has broadened into a tantrum against the Trudeau government generally, has reached a stage where it has moved beyond a legitimate expression of political opinion and dissent. By illegally occupying streets in downtown Ottawa, it has upended daily life in a city of 1 million people. It has broadened to menace supply chains by closing bridges carrying traffic to and from the United States, including, for nearly a week, a crossing near Detroit vital to the auto industry. In language by turns unhinged and menacing, it has demanded the removal or overthrow of Mr. Trudeau, who was just reelected to a third term in September.

That the protesters enjoy bellowing the word “liberty” does not negate the fact that their demands are blatantly antidemocratic and anti-constitutional. What they really favor is “liberty” from democratic norms.

Nor do the protesters represent a broad-based social movement. While many in their ranks are peaceable, the leadership includes extremists and white nationalists who have railed against immigrants, trafficked in misinformation and conspiracy theories, and brandished Confederate flags. According to a poll released Monday, 3 in 4 Canadians are fed up and want an end to the protest, which was launched in anger over a government move to broaden already tough pandemic measures.

The most prominent Canadian politician to give the protesters wholehearted support is Maxime Bernier, leader of a far-right party.

Fundamentally, the protesters are engaged in a resolute effort to play havoc with the strictures of civilized society because they are disgruntled with the actions of a fairly elected government. The government is right to proceed with caution to restore order.

Behind the Fractious Collaboration Steering the Canada Protests

New York Times, Sarah Maslin Nir and Natalie Kitroeff, 15 February 2022

Since the big rigs entrenched in the core of Canada's capital first pulled in nearly three weeks ago, they have arranged themselves in a semblance of order, parking in evenly spaced rows. Their drivers have stayed warm and are fed by a corps of marshaled volunteers, and though they have varying personal beliefs, they appear carefully on-message: "Freedom!" has been the repeated refrain for the past 19 days.

It is no accident: High above the clot of trucks on Ottawa's Parliament Hill, in hotel rooms just out of the fray, are the war rooms behind the operation. From them, a team of self-appointed leaders, some with military and right-wing organizing backgrounds, have orchestrated a disciplined and highly coordinated occupation.

They have spent the weeks huddling in conference rooms and streaming their own news conferences on social media platforms from hotel lobbies. It is a crew that includes former law enforcement officers, military veterans and conservative organizers, a sometimes fractious collaboration that has nonetheless helped to coalesce a demonstration against vaccine mandates into a force that has destabilized the city and sent shock waves throughout Canada.

And while the main blockade that had crippled trade and stalled commercial traffic for nearly a week at the main border crossing between Canada and the United States reopened this week, the protesters in Ottawa largely haven't budged.

Canadian officials, who do not have authority to tell the police how to operate, have become increasingly frustrated with the occupation and see the coordination not as a polished demonstration, but a dangerous threat.

"What is driving this movement is a very small, organized group that is driven by an ideology to overthrow the government," Marco Mendicino, the public safety minister, said in remarks on Tuesday. "Through whatever means they may wish to use."

The protesters' efforts seemed to be rewarded on Tuesday by the resignation of Ottawa's police chief, who had faced mounting criticism for the tepid response to the demonstrations in the capital since the start of the occupation. As news of the chief's departure reached the encampment Tuesday, jubilant honking blared through the city.

Peter Sloly, the police chief, resigned a day after Mr. Trudeau took the rare step of declaring a national public order emergency that extended more robust policing measures across the country. His invocation of the Emergencies Act also took aim at both protester fund-raising, which has been deemed a criminal activity, and the demonstrators' personal and business bank accounts.

The new public order threatens to unravel a group already at pains to project credibility. Its underpinnings — as a hodgepodge of people suffused in counterfactual belief systems, conspiracy theories and barely bridled rage at anything seen as contrary to their mission — frequently erupt through the official veneer.

At a news conference in the Sheraton Ottawa Hotel on Monday, opened to media other than solely conservative-leaning news outlets for one of the first times, there was an air of gravitas in a room that echoed with the constant coughing of dozens of maskless supporters.

"Some of you might oppose our grievances," Tamara Lich, one of the most visible group leaders, said to the television cameras. "However, democratic society will always have non-trivial disagreements, and righteous dissidents."

But when a television reporter, Glen McGregor, asked about a large cache of weapons found that day at a protest in Alberta, others in the conference room became enraged, shoving the reporter and calling for his ejection with yells of "how dare you!" as Mr. McGregor and his television crew fled into the street. Tom Marazzo, a spokesman, later defended the action.

What messaging discipline exists comes from the early public face of the effort, Ms. Lich, said Jay Hill, the interim leader of the Maverick Party, a small right-of-center group based out of Calgary, Alberta, created to promote the separation of Canada's three western Prairie Provinces from the rest of the country. Ms. Lich has deep ties to the group.

Even before the convoy assembled, its messaging was Ms. Lich's preoccupation, according to Mr. Hill, who said she called him several times even before arriving in Ottawa to strategize.

"We had a number of discussions about staying on message, about the need in this modern-day world of politics to have a very clearly defined message that is understandable and simple, a message that people can grasp hold of and run with," he said. "Tamara clearly understands that."

Ms. Lich played a leading role in organizing a GoFundMe campaign for the protests that raised \$7.8 million before the crowdfunding site shut it down after receiving "police reports of violence and other unlawful activity," GoFundMe said.

Previously, Ms. Lich worked as a personal trainer in Medicine Hat, Alberta, a town once dubbed "Hell's Basement," by Rudyard Kipling for its location on top of huge natural gas field.

Zach Smithson, an employee at Body Building Depot Fitness Emporium, where Ms. Lich used to work, said she has since become the talk of the town.

"I think we are all very proud of her," he said.

Ms. Lich did not respond to a call and text message requesting an interview.

B.J. Dichter, an official spokesman for the convoy, said he joined the effort after Ms. Lich sought help managing the swell of donations flowing into a GoFundMe page. Mr. Dichter has a history of spouting anti-Islamist views and once said that "political Islam" is "rotting away at our society like syphilis." He has rejected claims of racism.

"I'm Jewish," he told the journalist Rupa Subramanya. "I have family in mass graves in Europe. And apparently I'm a white supremacist."

'Freedom Convoy' Protesters in Canada's Capital City Dig In After Tougher Measures

Wall Street Journal, Paul Vieira and Kim Mackrael, 15 February 2022

The Canadian government on Tuesday defended its decision to invoke unusual emergency powers to quell protests that have paralyzed the capital for 19 days, with the country's top security official calling a small group behind the current demonstrations a serious threat.

"There have been those who have tried to characterize these illegal blockades [as being] about vaccines and mandates and fatigue with the pandemic. That is not what is driving this movement right now," Marco Mendicino, Canada's Public Safety Minister, said at a news conference Tuesday.

"What is driving this movement is a very small, organized group that is driven by an ideology to overthrow the government through whatever means they may wish to use," he said.

A spokesman for Mr. Mendicino declined to comment.

At the news conference, Mr. Mendicino noted that police in Alberta seized this week a cache of firearms, including handguns and 13 long guns, and a large quantity of ammunition in an early-morning raid targeting three trailers that were part of a blockade disrupting cross-border traffic between Coutts, Alberta, and Montana. Police said they arrested 13 people on Monday in connection with the Coutts border protests.

Mr. Mendicino said the Coutts border crossing was reopened on Tuesday.

In Ottawa, hundreds of heavy trucks and other vehicles continued to clog the streets on Tuesday, the day after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau revealed his intent to invoke emergency measures, which were immediately criticized by some rights groups and provincial leaders as overreach.

Mr. Mendicino's comments led some national security experts to call on the government to provide clarification. "I do think that it behooves the government to explain themselves, to the extent that they can, while maintaining national security," said Leah West, a national security expert at Carleton University in Ottawa.

The official order published Tuesday by the Canadian government lays out the justification for invoking extraordinary measures under the Emergencies Act, and what specific powers it will be using. The order said the government would, among other things, ban protests that police believe would lead to unlawful activity, prohibit gatherings near critical infrastructure such as border crossings, and allow authorities to commandeer tow trucks to help police remove demonstrators' vehicles.

The order said the protests in downtown Ottawa and at border crossings constitute a public-order emergency because of the threat of violence and unrest, and the disruption caused to the supply-chain network and two-way trade with the U.S.

An organizer for the main Ottawa protest group, which operates under the banner Freedom Convoy 2022, denied any plot to commit political violence.

"All we want is the Covid vaccine mandates removed," Chris Barber said. "There's never been a case for trying to overthrow the government."

The official order also contemplates measures related to financial services, as officials target protesters' source of cash. The order instructs crowdfunding websites and their payment processors to report large, suspicious donations to Canada's main finance-intelligence officials. Also, financial institutions are to inform authorities of any assets belonging to protesters, and in some instances cease providing services such as auto insurance to these individuals.

Tamara Lich, a spokeswoman for the Ottawa protesters, said the government's plan was unlikely to erode demonstrators' resolve. Ms. Lich and other protesters say they won't move until Canada drops all Covid-19 vaccine mandates and related restrictions.

"We will hold the line. There are no threats that will frighten us," Ms. Lich said at a news conference.

Mr. Trudeau's decision to tap emergency powers has triggered opposition from premiers of the Canadian provinces of Quebec, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, among others. However, the premier of Ontario, home to Ottawa and the recent blockade of a bridge that connects the province with the U.S., provided his blessing. "I'll support the federal government and any proposals they have to bring law and order back to our province," said Premier Doug Ford.

On Tuesday afternoon, people holding Canadian flags walked around parked trucks and chatted in small groups. About a block away from Parliament Hill, two concrete barriers were in the middle of the

road beside a speaker playing rock music and signs that read “Hold the Line” and “Mandate Freedom.”

Johanne Fleury, 58, and her husband Yves Fleury, 59, said they joined protesters in Ottawa on Saturday after driving to the capital city from their home near Grande Prairie, Alberta, because they want an end to vaccine mandates and Covid-related restrictions. They said they didn’t want to be arrested, but hadn’t made plans to leave after the emergency measures were announced.

“These guys are planning on sticking around, and so will we,” said Mr. Fleury, who works in the trucking industry.

Security experts said they didn’t expect the protesters in Ottawa to be removed immediately, despite the additional powers announced by the government. Law-enforcement officials “will have to take some time to marshal the necessary resources and figure out how best to move against the protest,” said Wesley Wark, a senior fellow with the Center for International Governance Innovation, a think tank in Waterloo, Ontario.

Mr. Wark rejected the notion, raised by civil rights organizations and some lawyers, that the government’s plan was too far-reaching for the circumstances. “This is not martial law,” he said. “This is a surgical instrument to give police at the local level certain tools.”

Aaron Wudrick, director of the domestic policy program at the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, said the prime minister is deploying a “nuclear option” to deal with what is largely a downtown Ottawa problem, namely getting tow trucks to remove vehicles. A senior city of Ottawa official said last week that tow-truck companies on retainer with the municipality have refused to remove the trucks in downtown Ottawa because of worries about losing business once the protest ends.

Mr. Wudrick, a former lawyer, said police in Windsor were successful this past weekend in removing protesters who blocked cross-border traffic on the Ambassador Bridge, which connects Detroit with Windsor, Ontario, without the need for emergency powers. A Canadian court issued an order, at the request of the city of Windsor, granting police permission to remove the protesters, who disrupted U.S.-Canada trade for nearly a week.

“It’s more a logistical challenge than a threat to the integrity of the country,” Mr. Wudrick said. He added that he is worried that civil liberties will be compromised, especially if tow-truck operators are forced to help police. “It seems to me that compelling individuals against their will to help the government seems like a suspension of civil liberties.”

From: Lambo, Pam -WSHDC -WS -PA

Sent: February 15, 2022 5:26 PM

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Subject: 2022-02-15: U.S. media roll-up: "Freedom Convoy" Protest (as of 4:30pmET)

Articles below (and attached)

ATTACHED: Refreshed twitter snapshot and congressional reactions

U.S. media pick up this afternoon now includes the resignation of Ottawa Police Chief, Peter Soly. As noted in this morning's roll-up, Ukraine is back as the lead story – more so following this afternoon's address to the nation by President Biden. Some US articles are attempting to drill down in to the specifics of The Emergencies Act. And some disturbing comments by Republican members of Congress (see attached). Also flagging that the US Consular Network Call Centre continues to receive calls (8) and emails (18) from Americans in last 24 hours – mostly negative, critical of the PM and The Emergencies Act – callers are polite, emails are not. US Missions (SEATL, MNPLS) are also receiving emails/letters from Americans – these are being flagged to GAC HQ.

ABBREVIATED HEADLINES

Column: American reactions to Canada's trucker protests shows much our politics have changed

LA Times, Jonah Goldberg, 15 February 2022

Opinion: Justin Trudeau's move to end the trucker protest was risky but correct

The Washington Post, Editorial Board, 15 February 2022

Ottawa's police chief resigns amid criticisms of the force's response to the occupation.

New York Times, Dan Bilefsky and Ian Austen, 15 February 2022

Ottawa's police chief resigns amid truck protest in Canada

Associated Press, 15 February 2022

FULL ARTICLES

Column: American reactions to Canada's trucker protests shows much our politics have changed

LA Times, Jonah Goldberg, 15 February 2022

I've remained quietly fascinated by the trucker protests in Canada. Quietly, because I've struggled to figure out what I think about them, fascinated because they are a window on the political transformations on both sides of the 49th parallel.

The protests began as a revolt against a new and ill-advised vaccine mandate in January that required unvaccinated truckers to get the jab or isolate for two weeks each time they crossed the U.S. border. While I think not getting vaccinated is largely ridiculous, the rule made little sense in an 80% vaccinated country or for an occupation that involves almost no human interaction. Truckers aren't nurses or schoolteachers. Solitude comes with the job. And [nearly 90%](#) of Canadian truckers are already vaccinated.

Of course, the protesters' passion came from the built-up frustration with two years of lockdowns and mandates. And, as often happens with mass protests, the demands metastasized over time.

Now they want Justin Trudeau's government to dissolve and hold new elections. The demand is impractical, and illegally blockading streets and bridges to force it is also unjustifiable — whether it's Canadian truckers or Black Lives Matter protesters or any other group. These folks may think of their actions as civil disobedience, yet when governments impose economic blockades, it's literally an act of war. On Monday, Trudeau [invoked the Emergencies Act](#), which gives the federal government broad authority to restore order.

What truly fascinates me is the reactions to the Canadian protests here in the U.S. They highlight the way the coalitions that make up the left and right have changed profoundly, and how their attitudes and ideas are changing as a result.

If I were to describe these protests to a left-winger 50 — or 150 years — ago they would sound great. Proletarian laborers spontaneously using their class-power to monkey-wrench the wheels of global capitalism to press their grievances! This was once the stuff of heroic socialist agitation. The fact that tow truck drivers refused to help remove the blockade would be seen as the very soul of worker solidarity. Now, when GoFundMe announced it [would cut off donations](#) to the truckers, liberals shrugged or cheered.

One explanation for the reaction is that the pandemic has been subsumed into the pre-existing culture war fight. That's why Trudeau, who is squarely on the liberal side of that divide, reflexively deployed every woke accusation imaginable at the largely peaceful strikers. Picking out a smattering of ugly signs — and one Confederate flag — Trudeau tried to tar the whole bunch with guilt-by-association. The truckers aren't merely racists and Nazi sympathizers, he claimed, but also showed signs of "[transphobia](#)" too. Rather than meet with the protesters, he chose [scorn](#): "Hate can never be the answer," he insisted.

This points to a larger explanation. The old prism of class has been supplanted by the prism of identity politics. As the Democratic Party is increasingly [dominated](#) by people with college and graduate degrees, the white working-class core of the old FDR coalition has steadily migrated [rightward](#) (and there are early signs of a [nonwhite working class migration](#) as well). Leading Democrats speak the language of "intersectionality," using phrases like [Latinx](#) that leave many Latinos cold. In the early days of the pandemic, mass protests in violation of lockdowns were acceptable — [even laudatory](#) — when done in the name of racial justice. But protests from truckers — or parents — who just want to return to normal? They're derided as anti-science or worse.

Meanwhile conservatives, traditionally the champions of law and order, never mind the free flow of commerce, fell in love with the truckers and their disobedience. Anti-mandate absolutism is, again, part of the story. But many on the right in the U.S. have also convinced themselves that the Republican Party must become a nationalistic "[workers party](#)." The condescending liberal elites, undemocratic technocratic experts and woke globalists running the Democratic Party have made the GOP the [natural home](#) of the working stiff, they argue. This stuff can be exaggerated of course, but there's an underlying truth to it as well. Regardless, one result has been the emergence of new right-wing emphasis on worker solidarity as a cultural imperative.

These domestic tectonic cultural changes turned the Ottawa protesters into a kind of Rashomon story or Spanish Civil War — a foreign conflict that illuminates how culture war combatants see the fight at home.

It's a confusing transition and neither side has quite figured out how to adapt to their new coalitional imperatives, never mind adopt public policies that fit them. Perhaps to compensate for this fact, the rhetoric has outstripped the reality. Each side glibly accuses the other of being an existential threat, pitting transphobic Nazis according to one side against totalitarians according to the other.

Neither side is right about the other, but it's unlikely the two will realize that any time soon.

Opinion: Justin Trudeau's move to end the trucker protest was risky but correct

The Washington Post, Editorial Board, 15 February 2022

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is justified in [invoking](#) an emergency [law](#) enabling enhanced government powers to end the protest that has paralyzed the capital city of Ottawa, savaged public order and inflicted significant damage on the world's 10th-largest economy.

The prime minister's unprecedented decision to use the Emergencies Act is also risky, as Mr. Trudeau clearly understands. Some of the protesters, whose ranks include an array of extremists, have signaled through intimidation, threats and aggressive conduct that they do not intend to leave Ottawa without a fight.

Mr. Trudeau will have to tread carefully to avoid giving them one. He has already wisely [ruled out](#) deploying the military to unclog the city's streets, which have been paralyzed since late January with tractor-trailers, blaring their horns and rumbling on diesel fuel. Nonetheless, among other expanded powers, the emergency law grants his government the right to compel towing companies to remove the trucks, which some had said they were reluctant to do. The potential for violence is real.

Perhaps as useful as tow trucks, or more so, Canadian officials also say they will use the law to freeze corporate and individual bank accounts; suspend vehicle insurance; and crack down on crowdfunding and cryptocurrency sites, which have enabled the protesters to raise more than \$10 million in barely three weeks, a chunk of it from donors in the United States.

The protest, which has broadened into a tantrum against the Trudeau government generally, has reached a stage where it has moved beyond a legitimate expression of political opinion and dissent. By illegally occupying streets in downtown Ottawa, it has upended daily life in a city of 1 million people. It has broadened to menace supply chains by closing bridges carrying traffic to and from the United States, including, for nearly a week, a [crossing](#) near Detroit vital to the auto industry. In language by turns unhinged and menacing, it has demanded the removal or overthrow of Mr. Trudeau, who was just reelected to a third term in September.

That the protesters enjoy bellowing the word "liberty" does not negate the fact that their demands are blatantly antidemocratic and anti-constitutional. What they really favor is "liberty" from democratic norms.

Nor do the protesters represent a broad-based social movement. While many in their ranks are peaceable, the leadership includes extremists and white nationalists who have railed against immigrants, trafficked in misinformation and conspiracy theories, and brandished Confederate flags.

According to a [poll](#) released Monday, 3 in 4 Canadians are fed up and want an end to the protest, which was launched in anger over a government move to broaden already tough pandemic

measures. The most prominent Canadian politician to give the protesters wholehearted support is [Maxime Bernier](#), leader of a far-right party.

Fundamentally, the protesters are engaged in a resolute effort to play havoc with the strictures of civilized society because they are disgruntled with the actions of a fairly elected government. The government is right to proceed with caution to restore order.

Ottawa's police chief resigns amid criticisms of the force's response to the occupation.

New York Times, Dan Bilefsky and Ian Austen, 15 February 2022

The chief of police who has led the effort to end the occupation of Ottawa resigned on Tuesday, a day after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau intervened amid criticisms that a tepid police response has failed to end the blockade buffeting the nation's capital.

Peter Sloly's resignation as Ottawa police chief, which was confirmed by the minister of public safety, came after Mr. Trudeau took the rare step of declaring a national public order emergency aimed at stopping protests that have roiled Canada for weeks.

The sluggish police response to the demonstrations in the capital's core has come under criticism as officers were greatly outnumbered and outflanked. Early on, the police did not prevent the trucks from entering downtown and then took days to put down concrete barriers to keep more trucks from entering what had effectively become a parking lot.

Catherine McKenney, an Ottawa city councilor, said the police had mismanaged the crisis from the beginning by allowing the convoy to come in, and underestimating its size and the length of its stay. The police analysis had missed "the actual conflict and danger and volatility faced by the residents who are living with this outside their front door," the councilor said.

Mr. Trudeau's move to invoke the Emergencies Act on Monday was the first time a Canadian government has taken such action in half a century, and his most aggressive response since the crisis began.

But nearly 24 hours after his announcement, the protests in Ottawa that have snarled traffic, disrupted daily life and undermined the local economy were still underway.

There have been protests across the country, including an almost weeklong blockade of a bridge connecting Windsor, Ontario, and Detroit that is vital to the supply chains of the global automobile industry.

The response to the crisis by the police as well as other levels of government has been widely criticized as inadequate, while Mr. Trudeau has come under fire for failing to be sufficiently decisive to end the turmoil. Some critics contend that he should have intervened earlier and perhaps even sent in the army.

Ottawa is a comparatively small city, with about one million residents, and has a police force to match, with fewer than 1,500 officers. After the mayor declared an emergency and hundreds of officers arrived to help, Mr. Sloly requested an additional 1,800 police officers. But he didn't get them and there were too few officers to handle the crowds.

Even after the premier of Ontario declared a state of emergency across the province and said that anyone involved in the protest would face "severe" consequences, nothing changed on the streets of the capital.

The few police in sight on the weekends were quickly swallowed up in overwhelming crowds, both protesting government pandemic regulations and enjoying the party atmosphere after almost two years of intermittent lockdowns. They appeared to be circulating in small numbers and not visibly handing out tickets or making arrests.

Under the extraordinary measures invoked by Mr. Trudeau, the police across the country will now be able to seize trucks and other vehicles being used in blockades. The measure will formally ban demonstrations that “go beyond lawful protest,” and the government can formally ban blockades in designated areas like border crossings, airports and the city of Ottawa.

Tow-truck operators, who have been reluctant to cooperate with the police, will also now be compelled to work with law enforcement agencies to clear Ottawa’s streets and the border crossings at Coutts, Alberta. If they don’t cooperate, they could face arrest.

While the prime minister and the cabinet can invoke the Emergencies Act whenever they think the security of Canada is under threat, the decision must then be approved by Parliament within a week.

Mr. Trudeau said that the protests have been illegally obstructing neighborhoods and disturbing residents, while the blockades have harmed the economy. “This is not a peaceful protest,” he said.

“The time to go home is now,” he added.

The decision to invoke the law came as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Alberta said on Monday it had arrested 13 people and seized items including guns, body armor and ammunition.

By Tuesday morning, traffic had begun flowing again at the Coutts crossing, the police said, after protesters began leaving the site following the arrests.

Ottawa’s police chief resigns amid truck protest in Canada

Associated Press, 15 February 2022

Ottawa’s police chief resigned Tuesday amid criticism of his inaction against the trucker protests that have paralyzed Canada’s capital for over two weeks, while demonstrators elsewhere across the country abandoned another one of their blockades at the U.S. border.

Trucks with horns blaring rolled out of the southern Alberta town of Coutts, across from Montana, ending the siege that had disrupted trade for more than two weeks. Police earlier this week arrested 11 people at the obstructed crossing and seized guns and ammunition.

The two developments came a day after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invoked extraordinary emergency powers to try to end the occupation in Ottawa and elsewhere around the country. Across Canada and beyond, the question in the coming days will be whether it works.

In Ottawa, the bumper-to-bumper demonstration by hundreds of truck drivers against the country’s COVID-19 restrictions — and the failure of Police Chief Peter Sloly to break the siege early on — have infuriated many residents. They have complained of being harassed and intimidated by protesters.

Sloly’s resignation was confirmed by a government official who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity. A message seeking comment from Sloly through the Ottawa police force was not immediately returned.

Canadian Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino said it is time for police to begin using their broad authority conferred under Canada’s Emergencies Act, which allows the government to ban the blockades and begin towing away trucks.

"We have given new powers to police, and we need them to do the job now," he said late Monday after Trudeau announced he was invoking the law.

Government leaders have not indicated when or where the crackdowns on the self-styled Freedom Convoy would begin. Mendicino said they were still working out the details on where the prohibited zones will be.

The government will be able to ban blockades at border crossings, airports and in Ottawa; freeze truckers' personal and corporate bank accounts and suspend their licenses; and target crowd-funding sites that are being used to support the blockades.

It also can force tow trucks to move the big rigs out of intersections and neighborhoods. Up to now, some towing companies have been reluctant to cooperate because of their support for the truckers or fears of violence.

The protesters around the country are decrying vaccine mandates for truckers and other COVID-19 precautions and venting their anger toward Trudeau's Liberal government.

Trudeau's decision to invoke the Emergencies Act came amid growing frustration with government inaction and concerns about the weapons found at the Alberta crossing. Also, a heavy-duty truck and farm tractor tried to ram a police cruiser at the site on Sunday, authorities said.

The nation's public safety minister said the nation can no longer tolerate the disruptions and threats.

"What the operation revealed is that you got a very small, hardened core driven by ideology," Mendicino said. "We have been fortunate thus far there has not been mass violence."

Ontario Premier Doug Ford, whose province includes Ottawa and Windsor, the site of a now-disbanded blockade at the Ambassador Bridge to Detroit, said: "Hopefully the police in the next few days, hopefully sooner, can move."

Ford said the siege in Ottawa is complicated by the presence of children in the protest. "They have kids there. We don't want anything to happen to kids. Bring your kids home," he said.

The busiest and most important border crossing, the Ambassador Bridge, was reopened on Sunday after police arrested dozens of demonstrators. The nearly week-long siege had disrupted auto production in both countries, but it was returning to normal on Tuesday.

Authorities also said traffic was moving again at the Pacific Highway border crossing south of Vancouver. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police said officers ordered demonstrators out late Monday, and several were arrested.

Protesters in the capital appeared to be more entrenched.

Erik Mueller, a truck driver who quit his job to join the blockade in Ottawa, called the emergency measures targeting the drivers "insane."

"We are not backing off," he said. "We have too much to lose."

Wayne Narvey said he took a leap of faith a week ago and drove his 30-year-old motor home from New Brunswick through a snowstorm to get to the capital.

"They can take our bank accounts, they can freeze our assets, they can take the insurance off our vehicles," he said. "They can play all the games they want. We're not leaving."

The demonstrations in Canada have inspired similar convoys in France, New Zealand and the Netherlands. U.S. authorities have said that truck convoys may be in the works in the United States.

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Sent: February 15, 2022 11:58 AM
To: Loken, Martin -WSHDC -GR <Martin.Loken@international.gc.ca>; McIntyre, Graeme -WSHDC -GR <Graeme.McIntyre@international.gc.ca>; Holmes, Michael -WSHDC -GR <Michael.Holmes@international.gc.ca>; Maisonneuve, Mélanie -WSHDC -BF <Melanie.Maisonneuve@international.gc.ca>; Kiameh, Madeleine -WSHDC -BF <Madeleine.Kiameh@international.gc.ca>; Fanning, Tammy -WSHDC -BF <Tammy.Fanning@international.gc.ca>; Stendardo, Frank -WSHDC -TD <Frank.Stendardo@international.gc.ca>; 'Arseneau, Michel' <michel.arseneau@rcmp-grc.gc.ca>; 'McGraw, Mathews' <mathews.mcgraw@rcmp-grc.gc.ca>; Gordon, Sean -WSHDC -PL <Sean.Gordon@international.gc.ca>; Castella, Alain -WSHDC -BF <Alain.Castella@international.gc.ca>
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Subject: 2022-02-15: U.S. media roll-up: "Freedom Convoy" Protest (as of 11:30ET)

Articles below (and attached)

SUGGESTED READING: Attached transcript of yesterday's PM press conference with DPM Freeland and Justice Minister/AG Lametti – note Q&A on pressure from WH
ATTACHED: Twitter snapshot and congressional/state/governors reactions

Not surprisingly, US media coverage overnight and today is focused on Canada's decision to invoke The Emergencies Act to address the ongoing illegal blockades and the RCMP arrests in Alberta. Headlines match coverage depending on liberal or conservative viewpoint. Last evening, *The New York Times* mistakenly tweeted that the PM would temporarily suspend civil liberties - tweet was subsequently deleted following a barrage of outrage by readers. Still seeing significant coverage of the situation in Ottawa but Russia/Ukraine coverage is back as the top story. Note the *USA Today* Fact Check article in the roll-up on disinformation and social media. As the Act is implemented, media will be watching closely for instances where there is resistance.

Abbreviated Articles

'Freedom Convoy,' police face off near U.S.-Canada border crossings as Trudeau invokes Emergencies Act

Washington Post, Ellen Francis and Andrew Jeong, 15 February 2022

Canadian police tried to clear protesters near crossings at the U.S.-Canada border, making arrests as Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invoked the country's Emergencies Act on Monday.

Baffled by the Chaos in Canada? So Are Canadians.

New York Times, Catherine Porter, 14 February 2022

It seemed a classically Canadian moment in a scene otherwise torn from the book of Trump America.

Canada's Trudeau Invokes Emergency Powers to Address Trucker Protests

Wall Street Journal, Paul Vieira and Kim Mackrael, 14 February 2022

In a highly unusual move, the Canadian government on Monday invoked a series of emergency powers that include limits on public gatherings in a bid to end disruptive demonstrations in the capital city and along the Canada-U.S. border.

Fact check: Canadian government didn't place rock-filled bins to incite violence at trucker protest

USA Today, McKenzie Sadeghi, 14 February 2022

The claim: The Canadian government planted dumpsters full of rocks to incite violence during COVID-19 demonstrations

Canada's trucker blockade is a right-wing fantasy made real

MSNBC, Ryan Cooper, 14 February 2022

On Sunday, the Ambassador Bridge on the U.S.-Canada border between Detroit and Windsor, Ontario, was reopened after a weeklong protest, in which a handful of right-wing fanatics had been blocking the bridge and holding up some \$355 million in goods in protest against a vaccine mandate for the trucking industry.

Canada tries to block funding for illegal border protests against Covid-19 rules with sweeping new financial measures

CNN, Kelly McCleary and Holly Yan, 15 February 2022

Canada has invoked the country's Emergencies Act for the first time ever in an attempt to sever financial support for protesters' costly blockades at US border crossings over Covid-19 mandates.

Canada PM Justin Trudeau slammed for invoking emergency powers to stop protests

NY Post, Yaron Steinbuch, 15 February 2022

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has been criticized by several civil liberties groups and politicians for invoking emergency powers to stop the protests across the country against COVID-19 restrictions.

Vigils planned at Canadian embassies in US to protest imprisonment of pastor who preached to Freedom Convoy

Fox News, Jon Brown, 15 February 2022

Supporters of a Canadian pastor who has spent the past week in a maximum-security Calgary prison after speaking to members of the Freedom Convoy have organized vigils at various Canadian consulates in the United States to protest his treatment Tuesday.

Full Articles

'Freedom Convoy,' police face off near U.S.-Canada border crossings as Trudeau invokes Emergencies Act

Washington Post, Ellen Francis and Andrew Jeong, 15 February 2022

Canadian police tried to clear protesters near crossings at the U.S.-Canada border, making arrests as Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invoked the country's Emergencies Act on Monday.

Standoffs between police and protesters in Coutts, Alberta, and Surrey, B.C., persisted overnight after authorities had earlier reopened the Ambassador Bridge, the busiest land border crossing and a key trade artery connecting Windsor, Ontario, to Detroit.

Trudeau on Monday became the first Canadian leader to invoke the act, under pressure to quell the chaos that has spiraled from the self-styled "Freedom Convoy" demonstrations against vaccine mandates and coronavirus restrictions.

The law, passed in 1988, will give police “more tools” to bring order to areas where public assemblies “constitute illegal and dangerous activities,” he said. Financial institutions, meanwhile, will get sweeping powers to halt the flow of funding to the Freedom Convoy protests.

Critics of Trudeau’s move quickly spoke out against the Liberal government. The nonprofit Canadian Civil Liberties Association said using the law, which gives the federal government broad powers, such as the authority to freeze financial accounts without court orders, was unjustified. “Emergency legislation should not be normalized. It threatens our democracy and our civil liberties,” it said in a statement.

The protests that began with truckers in Ottawa in late January have rippled across the country, choking off several U.S.-Canada border crossings, and inspiring protests against pandemic restrictions across the world. The Ambassador Bridge blockade lasted nearly a week, disrupting U.S. supply chains and millions of dollars in trade.

Near a partially blockaded crossing in Coutts, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police said Monday night, two people were arrested after a truck nearly barreled through a checkpoint, swerving at the last minute. Earlier, authorities announced the arrest of 11 people there and the seizure of guns, body armor and a “large quantity of ammunition.”

At the Surrey crossing, a police official told local media outlets, officers were trying “to ensure that we can reopen all critical infrastructure,” while anti-mandate protesters who camped nearby stood their ground. Police arrested more than a dozen people in Surrey overnight near the border crossing, a broadcaster in the province, Global BC, reported.

“This has gone on for far too long. ... It’s time for people to go home,” Trudeau said when he declared the emergency measures. He pledged they would be time-limited and geographically targeted, adding that they were not being used to deploy the military. Ottawa’s police chief has said military aid might be necessary.

Shannon Stubbs, a Conservative lawmaker who called Trudeau’s move a “serious blow to individual liberties,” said her party intended to debate it in Parliament. While the emergency declaration went into effect immediately, it must still get confirmation in parliament within seven sitting days.

In Manitoba, where protesters had clogged roads linking to North Dakota, the premier, Heather Stefanson, said the legislation should be applied proportionally, “in locations where it is truly needed.” While critical of disruptions at the U.S.-Canada border, Stefanson said law enforcement officials in her province were satisfied they had enough tools to maintain control.

Yet Ontario Premier Doug Ford welcomed action to stamp out unrest in his province, home to the nation’s capital, Ottawa, where protests against mandates and the Trudeau government have paralyzed daily life. In an announcement on Ontario’s lifting of restrictions, Ford also stressed the end of vaccine pass requirements in two weeks was not in response to the demonstrations.

Chrystia Freeland, Canada’s deputy prime minister and finance minister, listed steps such as expanding money laundering and anti-terrorism powers that would seek to cut off financing to the protests, including from online crowdfunding. “Your corporate accounts will be frozen,” she said. “ ... Send your semitrailers home.”

The announcement on the emergency powers followed weeks in which demonstrators in big rigs and other vehicles jammed streets in Ottawa, snarling traffic and forcing businesses to shut down. Solidarity protests spread to several U.S.-Canada border crossings, with people remaining despite threats of fines, prison time and the loss of their driver’s licenses.

Baffled by the Chaos in Canada? So Are Canadians.

New York Times, Catherine Porter, 14 February 2022

It seemed a classically Canadian moment in a scene otherwise torn from the book of Trump America.

Between the intersection transformed into a mosh pit and the graceful Parliament buildings cluttered with “fake news,” “the Great Resist” and “Covid red pill” signs, a middle-aged man named Johnny Rowe perched on a median last weekend with an amplifier and a simple greeting.

“Welcome to Ottawa,” he called out to the hordes streaming down the middle of the street, many hollering “freedom.” “Thank you for coming.”

If the outside world is baffled by the scenes unfolding in the streets of Canada, so are many Canadians. They are dumbfounded, perhaps none more so than the government officials who have stood by largely slack-jawed as giant trucks stake out ground in the normally placid capital, shaking and honking at night as people cheer and dance, neighbors be damned.

As demonstrations kept flaring, the government on Monday invoked the Emergencies Act, which greatly increases the government’s power to crack down on protest, and in Alberta the police arrested 11 people and seized a large cache of weapons. Earlier, traffic resumed over the Ambassador Bridge, a major international route blockaded for a week, and officials announced that they were lifting some contentious vaccine pass requirements.

The chaos of recent weeks has left many wondering if Canada is witnessing the birth of a political alt-right, or if it is a pandemic-induced tantrum that, once exhausted, will curl itself asleep, leaving behind a country bewildered but essentially unchanged. It could also be, some argue, that the so-called freedom convoy is not an aberration at all but a mirror to an integral part of the country that doesn’t fit the stereotype, and so is ignored.

The unrest seems a rebuff to the cherished mythology imposed on Canada’s citizens from abroad and held by many Canadians themselves as moderate, rule-following, levelheaded — and just plain nice.

“It feels like a national nervous breakdown,” said Susan Delacourt, a veteran Canadian political columnist from Ottawa who like many of her fellow citizens is wondering what exactly is happening to her country right now.

Start with the pervasive slogan of the unrest, scrawled across trucks, hats, shirt and flags, an epithet startlingly vulgar by Canadian standards that urges Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to go away. Some say he should be not just deposed but imprisoned over the vaccine regulations governments in Canada have passed.

The anger is new. Over the past two years of public health crisis, Canadians have followed their classic playbook. Even right-leaning provincial governments dutifully took their lead, for the most part, from public health experts, passing strict pandemic rules that citizens then followed.

While there have been some mask protests, more outrage was directed at local governments for not doing more to protect their citizens, and at politicians who broke the rules. Wearing a mask, and getting the vaccine, was deemed a basic act of civic solidarity. Canada has one of the highest rates in the world, with more than 83 percent of the population over the age of 5 having received at least two vaccine doses.

“Let’s take care of each other in this time of need, Canada,” Mr. Trudeau tweeted in March 2020, days after his wife showed symptoms and he became the first G7 leader to self-isolate. “Because that’s really who we are.”

Maybe it is because Canada, unlike the neighbor that overshadows it, was born not from revolution but from negotiation that its approach to rebellion now seems more than a little unconventional, even quirky. But one thing is clear: The members of the so-called freedom convoy are not bellowing “compromise” or “care for one another.”

The streets of downtown Ottawa echo with chants and slogans steeped in the language of the American Revolution, right down to the Don't Tread on Me pennants. "Freedom," yells a man in a red mask waving a Canadian flag. "Freedom," comes the ardent reply. Though the flag, it should be noted, was held aloft in a quintessentially Canadian fashion, attached to a hockey stick.

The repeated invocation of liberty is just one reason — along with the American, Confederate and Trump flags spotted in the mix — many believe the unrest is essentially a U.S. import.

For two years, Canadians have been largely stuck at home, and many have spent more time in front of the screen than ever. As they did, they absorbed the American culture war being played out from Fox News to Breitbart, and Trumpian ideas took root in Canada, said Gerald Butts, a longtime friend of Mr. Trudeau's and his former top political aide.

It was not just ideas.

Right-wing activists in the United States and elsewhere have lent more than moral support to their new kindred spirits in Canada. They are opening their wallets. At least some of the money that has allowed the protesters to keep their trucks fueled and cover other expenses has flowed in from untraceable sources on crowdfunding platforms and cryptocurrencies.

Canadian political veterans have taken note.

"We ran the longest federal election campaign in history in 2015, and we spent \$42 million, right?" said Mr. Butts.

By comparison, in just a few weeks, the truckers raised about a quarter of that.

"One of the most concerning things about this movement," Mr. Butts said, "is it's shown how easy it is to pour millions of dollars of dark money into Canadian politics."

The question now is how might that play out in the months and years ahead.

Traditionally, Canadian politics is a fight for the center, not for the fringes of the ideological spectrum. Political analysts point out that the far-right People's Party of Canada, whose leader, Maxime Bernier, is a champion of the trucker protest, did not win a single seat in last year's parliamentary election.

But, populism isn't totally alien to the country, points out Janice Stein, a political science professor at the University of Toronto. A populist, the brother of the Ontario Premier Doug Ford, was once mayor of the country's biggest city, Toronto, and for years, the Reform party rallied around a sense of Western alienation and socially conservative values.

"There's a worrying tendency in Canada to define everything pushing against our founding myth as an import from the United States," Ms. Stein said. "We have mythologized our niceness: 'We are not polarized like France and Britain, and the only major democratic country in which the center has held is Canada, and that's because we're so nice and so caring to each other.'"

Canadian politics may in fact be more genteel than in many other places, but not because Canadians are innately kinder. That has just become a lot clearer.

"This is a myth-busting moment," Ms. Stein said.

Sooner or later, the trucks will depart, but will the movement the prime minister dismissed as a "small fringe minority" continue to grow? Some have their doubts.

"This is a one-off political expression," said Paul Summerville, co-author of the book "Reclaiming Populism," which argues that Canada's strong socialized medicine and affordable education system has given the country a sense of fairness and equal opportunity, inoculating it against populism.

"People are tired, they are angry," said Mr. Summerville, a former investment banker in Victoria, British Columbia. "This is a very specific moment that has to do with people feeling very uncomfortable for the last two years, because of the pandemic."

The unrest has infuriated many Ottawa residents, who have led counterprotests against what they view as an intimidating occupation of their city. But they have also drawn huge crowds of supporters, particularly on the weekends, when the downtown has been turned into what feels like a raucous tailgate party, alternative news convention and brewing witch hunt, all at the same time.

Strangers stop for impromptu conversations, hug and beam at one another, smiling widely — which after two years of mask wearing offers an emotional balm. One woman paraded the streets with a sign exhorting people to show her their teeth.

It does not take long to hear stories of personal suffering, and to understand why an ordinarily rule-abiding people might decide that a little rebellion is called for.

"Every single one of these people, has been catastrophically hurt," said Mr. Rowe, the protester, lowering his megaphone for a moment. A Bikram Yoga instructor from the city of Kingston, two hours away, Mr. Rowe listed his losses over the past two years, tears brimming in his eyes: his home, his business and half of his retirement savings. And then there was the death of his brother-in-law.

"The suffering has gotten to a level where they have nothing to lose," he said.

Compared with many countries, Canada was let off easy by Covid, with far fewer deaths per capita than the United States. But it came at a heavy cost.

Restrictions have been heavy and long. Almost two years after the pandemic hit Canada, the country remains in various stages of lockdown, with indoor dining banned in the country's two largest provinces, Ontario and Quebec, until only recently. Residents of old-age homes were locked in for the better part of a year across the country. Students in Ontario missed more in-class learning than anywhere in North America, local newspapers state.

Recent polls show that most Canadians disagree with the tactics of the so-called freedom convoy, and worry that the country's democracy is being threatened. But, many feel sympathy for protesters, particularly younger Canadians.

"Imagine storm clouds on horizon," said Darrell Bricker, chief executive of the polling company Ipsos Public Affairs. "That has to discharge somewhere. This is part of the discharge."

Among those people watching the scenes unfold in Ottawa is one of the city's two poet laureates, Albert Dumont. An Algonquin elder, Mr. Dumont rejects not just the protesters' notion of freedom, given its effect on local residents, but the whole idea that Canada was ever particularly nice, or even tolerant.

"My dad didn't get to vote until 1960 — that's not long ago," he said. "There was a time when Canada was ugly and very cruel to Indigenous people."

Canada's Trudeau Invokes Emergency Powers to Address Trucker Protests

Wall Street Journal, Paul Vieira and Kim Mackrael, 14 February 2022

In a highly unusual move, the Canadian government on Monday invoked a series of emergency powers that include limits on public gatherings in a bid to end disruptive demonstrations in the capital city and along the Canada-U.S. border.

The measures, announced by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, represent one of the most striking responses by a Western government against protests by those opposing Covid-19 vaccine mandates and social restrictions in response to the pandemic, and immediately drew fire from some Canadian leaders and civil-liberties groups.

The government also said Monday the country was extending laws targeting money laundering to capture transactions, including cryptocurrencies, on crowdfunding platforms like GoFundMe.

"It is now clear that there are serious challenges to law-enforcement's ability to effectively enforce the law," Mr. Trudeau said at a news conference. "We cannot and will not allow illegal and dangerous activities to continue."

Mr. Trudeau's move to invoke emergency powers comes after police on Sunday reopened access to the Ambassador Bridge, which connects Detroit with the city of Windsor, Ontario. Up until late Sunday night, demonstrators had blocked incoming U.S. vehicles from entering Canada for roughly a week.

Officials said these extraordinary measures were necessary because of the damage done to the economy with the blocking of U.S.-Canada trade. Further, "we've seen intimidation, harassment and expressions of hate," said Canada's Public Safety Minister, Marco Mendicino, adding scenes in Ottawa have at times represented lawlessness. "That is one of the reasons why we've had to take [this] very careful and deliberate step."

The prime minister's decision to invoke the special powers faced sharp criticism Monday from both rights groups and some provincial leaders.

Quebec Premier François Legault said he can understand the sentiment that "enough is enough" in Ottawa but believes the planned measures aren't needed in his province and could be damaging.

"We really need not to put oil on the fire," Mr. Legault said.

An earlier and much more restrictive version of the legislation, called the War Measures Act, was invoked three times in Canadian history. Its most controversial use was in 1970, when Mr. Trudeau's father, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, used the act when he was prime minister to squelch a militant separatist group in Quebec, known as the FLQ.

The government said its invocation of the act doesn't undermine Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which came into force in 1982 and protects rights considered essential to preserving a free and democratic society. However, there is a debate about whether the government is overstepping in applying the act to those participating in protests and blockades.

Leah West, a national-security expert at Carleton University in Ottawa, said it is unclear that the current protests—in the capital, Ottawa, and at two border crossings in western Canada—meet the legal threshold of a national emergency. Invoking the Emergencies Act if that threshold isn't met, she said, "sets a precedent that unpopular dissent against the government is enough for the government to take these extraordinary powers into its own hands."

Prof. West said Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects civil liberties, but protection isn't absolute. She said that means rights can be limited and still comply with the Charter.

The measures come into effect immediately but Mr. Trudeau must present his reasoning for using the act to parliament and hold a vote within seven days. The leader of the New Democratic Party, Jagmeet Singh, said he would support the move, thereby giving the incumbent Liberals enough votes to ensure passage.

Mr. Trudeau said the military wasn't being deployed against the protesters, and the government wasn't suspending rights guaranteed under the country's constitution. He added the measures, which local police forces would enforce, are meant to target specific regions in the country where protests are judged to pose a threat. Mr. Trudeau described the demonstration in Ottawa, now in its 18th day, as "an illegal occupation."

City of Ottawa officials say the local police force doesn't have the necessary resources to quell the demonstration, and have asked the federal government for an additional 1,800 officers.

Despite the government's hard line, protesters believe their message is resonating.

"Any government that's ever taken freedoms away from people never gives them back," said Tyler Chiliak, a farmer from western Canada who has been in Ottawa since the Covid-19 protests began.

When he isn't out commiserating with fellow protesters, he is keeping warm inside his cargo trailer, where he cooks food, keeps bottled water and sleeps.

"It may take a while before we accomplish our goals so to speak. But whether they like it or not things are happening because we are here," Mr. Chiliak said.

Canadian Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland also said the country was extending laws targeting money laundering. All crowdfunding platforms and the payment-service provider they use must register with Canada's financial-intelligence agency, and report what they deem as large, suspicious donations. The recent protests had success in raising money on GoFundMe.

"This will help mitigate the risk that these platforms receive illicit funds," Ms. Freeland said. "We know these platforms are being used to support illegal blockades and illegal activity which is damaging the Canadian economy."

Officials also said some essential service providers—for example, tow-truck operators—could be compelled to render services to remove obstructive vehicles, for example those parked in front of Canada's parliament and other downtown streets. City of Ottawa officials say tow-truck operators have declined city requests to have some of the protesters' trucks, parked on a street in front of the legislature, removed from the main demonstration zone.

Police in Alberta said on Monday they seized a cache of firearms, including handguns and 13 long guns, and a large quantity of ammunition in an early-morning raid targeting three trailers that are part of a blockade disrupting cross-border traffic between Coutts, Alberta, and Montana. Police added they arrested and detained 11 individuals. "The group was said to have a willingness to use force against the police if any attempts were made to disrupt the blockade," the Royal Canadian Mounted Police said.

Also on Monday, Canada's most populous province, Ontario, said it would drop on March 1 requirements that citizens need to be fully vaccinated to enter certain public settings such as restaurants, bars and gyms. Ontario would join Alberta and Saskatchewan, among other provinces, in beginning to relax rules regarding Covid-19 vaccinations and social restrictions. Ontario Premier Doug Ford said the relaxing of rules wasn't connected to the protests popping up across the country. "This plan was in place long before the protests," he told reporters.

Mr. Trudeau and Liberal government officials have said they have no intention of loosening vaccine mandates as they pertain to the federal workforce, travel on airplanes and long-distance passenger rail, and essential workers—such as truck drivers—who cross the U.S.-Canada border.

Cornell Wiebe, a protester who was at the Ambassador Bridge blockade since the beginning, called the protest a success, given how much attention it received.

"We held the line until the government was going to remove the peaceful people with a use of force," he said in an email. "The whole point was to get international news coverage to expose the government."

The reopening of the 1.6-mile Ambassador Bridge brought relief to North American factories, as the blockade disrupted the continental supply-chain network and forced some companies to curtail production because they couldn't get parts delivered.

Matt Moroun, chairman of the company that operates the Ambassador Bridge, said Monday that officials in the U.S. and Canada need to develop more robust plans that protect border crossings "and ensure that this kind of disruption to critical infrastructure will never happen again."

Fact check: Canadian government didn't place rock-filled bins to incite violence at trucker protest

USA Today, McKenzie Sadeghi, 14 February 2022

The claim: The Canadian government planted dumpsters full of rocks to incite violence during COVID-19 demonstrations

During major protests, rumors sometimes surface about bricks being deliberately placed by law enforcement to incite violence.

The baseless conspiracy theory emerged in Kenosha, Wisconsin, in anticipation of the Kyle Rittenhouse verdict, and similar false claims about pallets of bricks made the rounds during the 2020 election and nationwide demonstrations against racial injustice and police brutality.

The latest iteration of the claim targets the Canadian trucker demonstration against COVID-19 vaccination requirements.

"Canadian Government leaving dumpsters full of rocks in the streets in the hopes that the protests will turn violent," reads a Feb. 9 Facebook post from the page Libertarian Candidates that accumulated more than 800 reactions in less than three days.

Accompanying the text is an image of a large, red container filled with rocks and rubble. A caption over the photo says, "If anything happens cause of those rocks, its (sic) 100% orchestrated." The photo was captured from a Feb. 7 TikTok video that generated more 39,000 likes.

The claim follows Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson's state of emergency declaration, which followed reports of violence and disruptive behavior amid the ongoing demonstrations.

But rocks were not placed by the government to incite violence. The image circulating online shows a container filled with rubble from a construction project that had been taking place long before the demonstrations started, USA TODAY confirmed..

Container was for a construction project

A logo seen on the container reveals it belongs to Mr. Dumpster, a bin rental company located in Ottawa. One of the owners, Nicolas Benson, told USA TODAY that the bin wasn't "just dropped off" for the demonstrations and there isn't anything malicious about it.

He said a contractor rented a bin for a construction project that has been taking place since the summer of 2021 in downtown Ottawa, and the bin was removed from the location the same day the TikTok video went viral.

The company also took to social media to address the claims.

"The dumpster is being rented and used for concrete repair work that has been ongoing for over a year by a reputable contractor," reads a Feb. 7 Facebook post from Mr. Dumpster. "The use is strictly for the contractor and in no way intended for any malicious acts. As a precaution, the dumpster was removed Sunday afternoon as requested by the contractor."

The construction took place outside the Constitution Square office complex near Canada's Parliament Hill, where many of the demonstrations have been taking place. On Feb. 10, a reporter with AFP visited the site and confirmed the dumpster was no longer there.

Fact check: No evidence Canadian prime minister fled country amid trucker protests

USA TODAY reached out to the city of Ottawa and the Ottawa Police Service for additional comment.

Our rating: False

Based on our research, we rate FALSE the claim that the Canadian government planted dumpsters full of rocks to incite violence during COVID-19 demonstrations. The company that owns the container said it was being used by a contractor for a construction project that had been taking place since 2021. The container has since been removed.

Canada's trucker blockade is a right-wing fantasy made real

MSNBC, Ryan Cooper, 14 February 2022

On Sunday, the Ambassador Bridge on the U.S.-Canada border between Detroit and Windsor, Ontario, was reopened after a weeklong protest, in which a handful of right-wing fanatics had been blocking the bridge and holding up some \$355 million in goods in protest against a vaccine mandate for the trucking industry.

Protesters had taken over another nearby crossing into Sarnia, and one in Alberta, as well. As a result, Ford, Toyota, Stellantis and Honda idled some six Canadian car factories for several days, with knock-on effects creating even more snarls in supply chains. With one of Canada's major cities paralyzed, and three key economic arteries between it and the world's mightiest empire clogged, a severe shortage of new cars has been jacking up inflation and thus tanking President Joe Biden's approval rating.

But these protests are just the visible part of a larger right-wing occupation movement, and indicative of a worrying anti-government trend. And equally as worrying is how law enforcement on both sides of the border have responded.

Ottawa was terrorized for nearly two weeks by a few hundred protesters honking horns day and night, waving Nazi flags, harassing passers-by, and in one case, allegedly attempting to burn down an apartment building.

Canadian police finally cleared off Ambassador Bridge after the blockaders defied a court order to disperse. But throughout this process, law enforcement in both countries were astoundingly timid in their responses. Canadian cops had been walking on eggshells; we "are taking a diplomatic approach," the Windsor police chief told reporters. Meanwhile, Ottawa police tried to coax the city occupiers out by cutting off their fuel and getting an injunction against honking horns instead of arresting them. As for U.S. law enforcement, there was no sign that the country's gigantic security apparatus would crack down on the demonstration.

These events show that when law enforcement is genuinely needed to quash a far-right insurgency, it is timid and reluctant to do anything — a dangerous precedent to set indeed. Because these blockades are very likely just the start.

To be clear, as I have previously written, in the U.S. there definitely is far too much money spent on cops and courts, far too little spent on welfare benefits and social services that actually prevent crime,

and far too little accountability for abusive cops. American police and jails are de facto charged with warehousing the social dysfunction caused by extreme inequality rather than actually doing much to control crime. But as we saw in Ottawa and Windsor, a democratic government does at least need some kind of armed service just in case some deranged violent minority tries to impose its will by force.

The problem in the United States, and it seems in Canada as well, is that police simply can't bring themselves to believe that far-right groups can be "real" criminals." When faced with right-wing lawbreakers, police (who are overwhelmingly conservative) tend to either sympathize with their demands or helplessly legitimize their grievances. The law enforcement response to the situation along the Canadian border smacked strongly of what happened with the Capitol Police before and during the attempted putsch on Jan. 6, when the agency brass failed to mobilize sufficiently despite obvious warnings and some of the officers fraternized with the rioters (though most of the rank-and-file did do their jobs as best they could, to be fair).

It scarcely needs to be mentioned that police do not grant such deference to nonwhite or leftist protest movements. For instance, when Native American groups temporarily blocked a key Canadian highway some years back over a land dispute, heavily armed SWAT teams were ready within hours to storm in and arrest them, which, unsurprisingly, turned out to not be necessary as they opened the road up after one day. In the U.S., Black Lives Matter protests that were almost entirely peaceful were constantly confronted with psychotic police violence. Black activists generally got the worst of it, but a substantial number of white people were savagely attacked as well. The "J20" group that protested Donald Trump's inauguration were persecuted for years by the Department of Justice with ludicrous charges carrying decades in prison (most of which were eventually dropped).

It's important to be clear about what the goals were here. These "truckers" (many of the participants are not actually truck drivers) are not Rosa Parks or Martin Luther King Jr. Their main explicit demand was an end to vaccine mandates and mask rules. They want this monstrous goal, which as a matter of basic biology would make the pandemic worse, imposed over the wishes of a large majority of Americans and a huge majority of Canadians. The extreme right can't win an election, so they are effectively taking the auto industry and the global supply chain hostage to get what they want.

It would be hard to imagine a more legitimate use of state authority to resist this demand — not with a massacre, of course, but with firm action to reopen traffic and take the culprits into custody. Not only would it be protecting the health of the public (including Canadian truck drivers themselves, who are overwhelmingly vaccinated and not participating in the protest) and reopening the flow of vital goods and services, but it also would set a salutary example. If these groups get away with this, the far right will be emboldened, and will very likely attempt similar attacks and protests again and again all over Canada and the U.S. Fox News is already trying its level best to whip up an identical "convoy" to disrupt American highways and cities.

But for that to avoid more disruptions like this, law enforcement is apparently going to need some serious changes. If these agencies can't protect society from the deranged aggression of a right-wing fringe, they need to be rebuilt from the ground up so they can.

Canada tries to block funding for illegal border protests against Covid-19 rules with sweeping new financial measures

CNN, Kelly McCleary and Holly Yan, 15 February 2022

Canada has invoked the country's Emergencies Act for the first time ever in an attempt to sever financial support for protesters' costly blockades at US border crossings over Covid-19 mandates.

Financial institutions will now have the power to freeze personal or corporate accounts they believe are being used to fund the illegal protests, Freeland said.

"This is about following the money. This is about stopping the financing of these illegal blockades," Minister of Finance Chrystia Freeland said Monday.

The government will use the law to target those funding protesters who have blocked border crossings -- resulting in economic losses of \$500 million a day, she said.

While the crucial Ambassador Bridge between Ontario and Michigan has reopened after a weeklong blockade, protesters are still obstructing crossings between Emerson, Manitoba, and Pembina, North Dakota, as well as between Coutts, Alberta, and Sweet Grass, Montana.

On Monday, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police seized long guns, body armor and high-capacity magazines tied to a group within the protest in Coutts, it said.

And now the US is closely coordinating with Canada to share information on people who might try to participate in blockades, Canada's Minister of Public Safety Marco Mendicino told CNN.

"The United States is monitoring carefully the blockades in Canada and what we agreed is that we could continue to share information and to advance the very close collaboration that exists between our CBSA (Canada Border Services Agency) and the (US) Customs and Border Patrol, so that we can identify any potential individuals who may trying to cross the border to advance illegal blockades in Canada," Mendicino said.

The public safety minister has been in regular contact with US Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas he said.

"Given the current moment that we're in ... we're obviously going to do what we can to bring about the end of these illegal blockades," Mendicino said.

An unprecedented move

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said he was invoking the Emergencies Act for the first time since it became law in 1988 to blunt the impact of the "Freedom Convoy" protests.

The rallies began when a group of truckers moved into Canada's capital on January 29, clogging streets surrounding the Parliament building and elsewhere in downtown Ottawa to protest a new mandate requiring them to be fully vaccinated when crossing the Canadian-US border or face a two-week quarantine.

They have been joined in Ottawa and at border stops and cities across the nation by others who want an end to other Covid-19 mitigation measures, like mask mandates, lockdowns and restrictions on gatherings.

But the protesters are a vocal minority. About 4 in every 5 Canadians fully vaccinated and nearly 90% of Canada's truckers fully vaccinated and eligible to cross the border, the government said.

"These illegal barricades are doing great damage to Canada's economy and to our reputation as a reliable trading partner," Freeland said.

The blockade at the Ambassador Bridge, which was cleared Sunday, impacted about \$390 million worth of commerce a day, the minister said. The combined impact of blockades at border crossings, including those in Alberta and Manitoba, has been \$500 million each day, Freeland said.

"These costs are real. They threaten businesses, big and small," Freeland said. "The Canadian economy needs (truckers) to be doing legitimate work, not to be illegally making us all poorer."

In addition to allowing financial institutions to freeze accounts suspected of funding illegal protests, Canada is also requiring crowdfunding sites and payment service providers used by protesters to register with the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada and report any large

suspicious donations -- including digital payments and with cryptocurrencies. Some sites have raised millions of dollars.

While the Emergencies Act allows for the use of the military, the government will not take that step, Trudeau said Monday.

The measure can also temporarily suspend citizens' rights to free movement or assembly, but Trudeau said the government is not overriding the Charter of Rights and Freedoms -- a part of the Canadian Constitution that lays out "rights and freedoms that Canadians believe are necessary in a free and democratic society," according to a Canadian government website.

"We are not preventing people from exercising their right to protest legally," Trudeau said. The law will be limited geographically, in scope and in time, he noted.

Ambassador Bridge owner issues 'call to action'

The reopening of the Ambassador Bridge was "a win for Michigan's working families who are just trying to do their jobs and for businesses who can get back to shipping their products and produce," Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer said in a statement Monday.

The bridge is the busiest land border crossing in North America, linking Detroit and Windsor, Ontario. It carries nearly 30% of annual trade between Michigan and Canada, Whitmer said.

That blockade, which caused supply chain issues for automakers on both sides of the border, ended when Canadian authorities cleared pedestrians and vehicles that had been blocking access to the bridge over the weekend.

Whitmer thanked US and Canadian border officials and business leaders for their work in resolving the ordeal and said it was important to "ensure that this does not happen again."

The company that owns the bridge echoed that sentiment and issued a "call to action" to prevent future closures.

"We must join together to come up with an actionable plan that will protect and secure all border crossings in the Canada/U.S. corridor and ensure that this kind of disruption to critical infrastructure will never happen again," said Matt Moroun, the chairman of Detroit International Bridge Company. "They are critical pipelines that supply the goods we need to keep our factories going, our neighbors working and our economies thriving."

But the standoff at the Coutts border crossing in Alberta took a turn Monday.

Eleven people were arrested, and authorities seized 13 long guns, handguns, multiple sets of body armor, a machete and a large quantity of ammunition and high-capacity magazines connected to a small, organized group within a larger protest at the crossing, Royal Canadian Mounted Police said.

"The group was said to have a willingness to use force against the police if any attempts were made to disrupt the blockade," the statement said. "This resulted in an immediate and complex investigation to determine the extent of the threat and criminal organization."

Ontario to loosen pandemic restrictions

While protests continue in parts of Canada, Ontario Premier Doug Ford said he plans to lift the province's vaccine passport requirements March 1 if hospitalization rates continue to improve.

Capacity limits will also be eliminated in all indoor public settings starting March 1, though masking requirements in Ontario will remain in effect "just a little bit longer," Ford said Monday.

But the loosening of pandemic restrictions have nothing to do with the protests, the premier said. "Let me be very clear: We're moving in this direction because it's safe to do so," Ford said Monday. "Today's announcement is not because of what's happening in Ottawa or Windsor, but despite it."

He also vowed "serious consequences" for those who cause disruptions while demonstrating in Ontario.

"To those who are still there, to those of you who are there with the sole objective of causing disruption and chaos, there'll be serious consequences for this lawless activity," Ford said.

"We will continue to raise the consequences against those who are holding millions of jobs and people hostage."

Canada PM Justin Trudeau slammed for invoking emergency powers to stop protests

NY Post, Yaron Steinbuch, 15 February 2022

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has been criticized by several civil liberties groups and politicians for invoking emergency powers to stop the protests across the country against COVID-19 restrictions.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association has argued that the protests, which have snarled traffic in cities and at the border, did not meet the standard to have invoked the Emergencies Act.

"The Emergencies Act can only be invoked when a situation 'seriously threatens the ability of the Government of Canada to preserve the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of Canada' & when the situation 'cannot be effectively dealt with under any other law of Canada,'" it said on Twitter.

"Governments regularly deal with difficult situations, and do so using powers granted to them by democratically elected representatives. Emergency legislation should not be normalized. It threatens our democracy and our civil liberties," the association added.

Trudeau on Monday invoked Canada's Emergencies Act, which gives the federal government broad powers to restore order.

It threatened to tow away vehicles to keep essential services running; freeze truckers' personal and corporate bank accounts; and take further action to strike at their livelihoods and the sources of their financial support.

"Consider yourselves warned," Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland told the "Freedom Convoy" members.

"If your truck is used in these blockades, your corporate accounts will be frozen. The insurance on your vehicle will be suspended. Send your rigs home," Freeland added.

Some groups have approved of the measure, calling it "responsible" and "a good strategy," but others have condemned it as government overreach, Fox News reported.

Lori Williams, a politics professor at Mount Royal University in Calgary told Reuters that "there's the danger this could create more problems," adding: "That's why this has to be done with the cooperation of premiers and if they don't want help, then the federal government needs to hang back.

"It has to be very targeted, very strategic and very restrained, because these are enormous powers that are being implemented," she said.

Leah West, an assistant professor at Carleton University in Ottawa, said: "The federal government must consult with provinces and Cabinet must believe the protests rise to the level of a national emergency.

"Can it truly be said the security of Canada is threatened by largely non-violent protests? Certainly, our sovereignty and territorial integrity are not at risk," she said in a tweet.

Quebec Premier Francois Legault said that imposing the act risks putting "oil on the fire" by further polarizing the population and argued that local authorities in the province have the situation under control.

"I was very clear with the Prime Minister that the federal emergency act must not apply in Quebec. I think we don't need it. I think that at this moment it would not help the social climate," Legault told reporters, according to Reuters.

"There's a lot of pressure right now and I think we have to be careful. So it's about time we put all Quebecers together. But I can understand that enough is enough in Ottawa. You can protest but you cannot do what they are doing since two weeks," he said.

In Manitoba, Premier Heather Stefanson said she believed that "the sweeping effects and signals associated with the never-before-used Emergencies Act are not constructive here in Manitoba, where caution must be taken against overreach and unintended negative consequences.

"While the situation is very different in Ontario, this ultimate federal legislation should only be considered on a measured and proportional basis, in locations where it is truly needed," Stefanson told reporters.

Meanwhile, Ontario Premier Doug Ford said: "I'll support the federal government and any proposals they have to bring law and order back to our province, to make sure we stabilize our businesses and trade around the world as the world is watching us right now, wondering if it's a stable environment to open up businesses and expand businesses.

"These occupiers, they're doing the total opposite what they say they're there to do. They're hurting hundreds of thousands of families, millions of jobs across the province," he told reporters.

Goldy Hyder, CEO of the Business Council of Canada told Reuters: "We recognize the gravity of the federal government's decision to invoke the Emergencies Act. Having called on the federal government to show national leadership, we welcome this as a step toward ending illegal blockades across the country and upholding the rule of law."

Phil Boyle, associate chair for legal studies at the University of Waterloo called it "an interesting strategic move there to go after the money. That seems appropriate.

"One of the things that worked in Windsor, with the Ambassador Bridge, was the threat of taking away their licenses. If your livelihood depends on license, you're going to think twice before putting that at risk. So that might very well work with the case of Ottawa," Boyle told Reuters.

"No doubt there will be some litigation to come of this, considering it's never been done before... If these emergency measures are targeted within a particular province... Trudeau would only do it if he had the relevant province on board. Maybe that would lessen the potential for litigation," he said.

"I wonder, how does this Federal emergencies order square with the (Ontario) provincial emergencies order that was just ordered on Friday? I don't think we've ever been in a situation where both the provincial and the federal government have, at the same time, invoked extraordinary emergency measures," Boyle added.

For more than two weeks, hundreds and sometimes thousands of protesters in trucks and other vehicles have clogged the streets of Ottawa, the capital, and besieged Parliament Hill, railing against

vaccine mandates for truckers and other COVID-19 precautions and condemning Trudeau's Liberal government.

Vigils planned at Canadian embassies in US to protest imprisonment of pastor who preached to Freedom Convoy

Fox News, Jon Brown, 15 February 2022

Supporters of a Canadian pastor who has spent the past week in a maximum-security Calgary prison after speaking to members of the Freedom Convoy have organized vigils at various Canadian consulates in the United States to protest his treatment Tuesday.

Pastor Artur Pawlowski, who remains in solitary confinement for 23 hours per day at the Calgary Remand Centre, according to his lawyer, was arrested last Monday after he spoke to members of the trucker blockade along the U.S.-Canada border in Coutts, Alberta, on Feb. 4.

During a 20-minute speech to the truckers, the pastor urged them to "hold the line" against government overreach without resorting to violence. They had reportedly reached an agreement to abandon their blockade of the U.S. border and travel to Edmonton until changing their minds following Pawlowski's address.

Pawlowski also recounted to them the parallels he sees between the Freedom Convoy and Poland's Solidarity movement in the 1980s that ultimately led to the liberation of his native country, despite a crackdown from its communist government.

'We don't fight with guns and swords'

Pawlowski's most recent arrest marked his fifth since the pandemic. He first made international headlines last April when he threw armed police out of his sanctuary when they attempted to inspect it for COVID-19 compliance during an Easter service.

After continuing to hold church services in defiance of a court order, he has faced repeated dramatic arrests, including in the middle of a busy highway and on the tarmac of the Calgary airport.

Last summer, he conducted a speaking tour throughout the United States, meeting with lawmakers and warning large audiences that Western governments increasingly resemble the communist regime in Poland he fled as a young man.

Pawlowski was preparing to return to the border to officiate a church service and speak to the truckers there last week when police apprehended him, according to Pawlowski's son, Nathaniel Pawlowski.

"There was an undercover police van, unmarked vehicles staking out our house, we're guessing, for many, many hours, because they were outside for a long time," he told Fox News Digital.

Pawlowski was ultimately charged on one count of mischief over \$5,000, one count of aiding in blocking critical infrastructure and one count of breaching a bail condition for "not keeping the peace," which was related to probation conditions under which he was placed in October after being arrested following his U.S. tour.

Pawlowski remains imprisoned after being denied bail during a hearing last Wednesday, when a Crown prosecutor alleged that the pastor's speech to the truckers was an "overt threat to violence," according to the CBC.

Pawlowski explicitly told the truckers twice not to resort to violence during their protests, according to video of his remarks.

"May God help us all, because we don't fight with guns and swords," he said. "We don't fight with Tasers and the police vehicles. We don't. We just want to go back and work hard and achieve something and provide for our families. We just want to be left alone."

"Again, I'm not talking about violence, swords and guns all that stuff," he later told the truckers. "You have the most powerful wings ever. Who can move 1,000 trucks? Who can move 10,000 truckers with 100,000 supporters?"

Pawlowski faces another bail hearing Wednesday.

'We're at a pivotal point in history'

Nathaniel Pawlowski said his father has been treated poorly in prison but that he remains undeterred and has undertaken two fasts based on biblical tradition.

"He finished a three-day fast based on the story of Esther, where she fasted so that the enemy would be exposed," he said. "And now he's doing a 21-day 'Daniel fast,' which is basically light food, no meat. It's eating vegetables so that he would get an answer from God."

Peaceful prayer protests against Pawlowski's imprisonment are being planned Tuesday at the Canadian consulates in New York City, Seattle, Los Angeles, Chicago and Las Vegas.

Cindy Chafian, who is the executive director of Firebrand Action and Media, which is organizing the vigils, said she remains unsure what the turnout at the embassies will be given the short notice but that the initiative remains important.

"Regardless of what happens, we're still going to keep pushing through, because I don't think they're going to let Artur out," she said. "But the goal is to raise awareness to what's happening to Artur. It's not just what's going on since COVID. They've been targeting him for many, many years. He is not a friendly person in the government's eyes because he speaks the truth, and they don't like that."

The organization is also readying signatures for a letter to send to Congress regarding Pawlowski's treatment.

Chafian said the initiative's goals extend beyond Pawlowski and are intended to raise international awareness regarding how other clergy in Canada have been treated since the pandemic. Churches throughout Canada have faced imprisoned pastors, locked facilities, steep fines and continued interference from government officials.

In June, Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., called on the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) to consider adding Canada to its special watch list because of how pastors are being treated in the country.

"We're at a pivotal point in history, and if we don't stop this, we're just going to go down the deeper slide," said Chafian. "And if we don't think that it's coming here to the U.S., we're woefully mistaken."

From: Lambo, Pam -WSHDC -WS -PA

Sent: February 14, 2022 5:21 PM

To: Loken, Martin -WSHDC -GR <Martin.Loken@international.gc.ca>; McIntyre, Graeme -WSHDC -GR <Graeme.McIntyre@international.gc.ca>; Holmes, Michael -WSHDC -GR <Michael.Holmes@international.gc.ca>; Maisonneuve, Mélanie -WSHDC -BF <Melanie.Maisonneuve@international.gc.ca>; Kiamah, Madeleine -WSHDC -BF <Madeleine.Kiamah@international.gc.ca>; Fanning, Tammy -WSHDC -BF <Tammy.Fanning@international.gc.ca>; Stendardo, Frank -WSHDC -TD <Frank.Stendardo@international.gc.ca>; 'Arseneau, Michel' <michel.arseneau@rcmp-grc.gc.ca>; 'McGraw, Mathews' <mathews.mcgraw@rcmp-grc.gc.ca>; Gordon, Sean -WSHDC -PL

<Sean.Gordon@international.gc.ca>; Castella, Alain -WSHDC -BF
<Alain.Castella@international.gc.ca>
Cc: Baird, Katherine -WSHDC -DHOM/CDMA <Katherine.Baird@international.gc.ca>; Grant, Heather -WSHDC -WS <Heather.Grant@international.gc.ca>; Bélanger, Jérôme -WSHDC -GR <Jerome.Belanger@international.gc.ca>; *WSHDC-Media Relations <D-WSHDC-MediaRelations@international.gc.ca>; Parsons, Alanna -NGB <Alanna.Parsons@international.gc.ca>; Barratt, Adam -WSHDC -WS <Adam.Barratt@international.gc.ca>; Boudreau, Wendy -WSHDC -WS <Wendy.Boudreau@international.gc.ca>; Maron, Stefano -WSHDC -WS <Stefano.Maron@international.gc.ca>; Fisher, Dani -MNPLS -GR <dani.fisher@international.gc.ca>; Connell, Christine -DTROT -GR <Christine.Connell@international.gc.ca>; Denter, Christian -NGB <Christian.Denter@international.gc.ca>; Beaulieu, Sebastien -NGA <Sebastien.Beaulieu@international.gc.ca>
Subject: 2022-02-14: U.S. media roll-up: “Freedom Convoy” Protest (as of 4:30pmET)

US media articles below (and attached)

ATTACHED: Refreshed twitter snapshot and congressional/state/governors reactions

NEW THIS AFTERNOON: The Alberta RCMP arrests of eleven “militant mindset” protestors is now getting US media coverage. CNN picked up on the RCMP’s detailing of what they found -- 13 long guns, hand guns, multiple sets of body armour, a machete, large quantity of ammunition and high capacity magazines. <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/news/2022/alberta-rcmp-make-arrests-coutts-border-blockade>

There are also media reports about the hacking of site GiveSendGo, putting all of their data in the public domain. Initial media reports indicate that 55 percent of overall donors are American and 39 percent are Canadian but of the total donation dollars, 51 percent comes from Canadians while Americans are giving 43 percent. And of the top ten donors, 6 are Canadian – 60 percent. https://twitter.com/ctv_jon/status/1493067756366970884?s=24

It’s also worth noting that Ben Collins who covers disinformation, extremism and the Internet for NBC News has gone from regular reporting on the January 6 riot/committee investigation to the momentum of the US trucker convoy and foreign meddling. In recent days, Facebook officials have told NBC that some of the online groups promoting American “trucker convoys” are being run “by fake accounts tied to content mills in Vietnam, Bangladesh, Romania and several other countries.” NBC’s reporting further notes that extremism researchers are now warning that many “anti-vaccine and conspiracy-driven communities in the U.S. are quickly pivoting to embrace and promote the idea of disruptive convoys”. According to researchers at Harvard University’s *Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy*, while the motivations behind these content mills may not be clear, the “pattern fits existing efforts to make money off U.S. political divisions”.

There are also a number of US media articles that weave in a mention of the next iteration of road closures by American truckers. Destinations are not clear but the date of March 5 is noted, with speculation of multiple convoys (perhaps starting in California) and at least one heading towards Washington DC in the days prior -- which could mean arrival by the March 1 State of the Union.

Abbreviated Articles

As U.S. ‘trucker convoy’ picks up momentum, foreign meddling adds to fray

NBC News, Ben Collins, 11 February 2022

There is growing momentum in the U.S. anti-vaccination community to conduct rallies similar to Canada’s “Freedom Convoy” that has paralyzed Ottawa, Ontario, and the effort is receiving a boost from a familiar source: overseas content mills.

Crowdfunding site for Canadian 'Freedom Convoy' disabled in possible hack

Washington Post, Aaron Gregg, 14 February 2022

The fundraising website used to raise millions of dollars for a "Freedom Convoy" protest led by truckers against coronavirus restrictions in Canada is offline after reports of a possible hack that exposed donor information.

Angry truckers paralyzed Canada's capital. It could happen here too

LA Times, Doyle McManus, 13 February 2022

The pictures from Ottawa over the last two weeks have defied every American stereotype of Canadians. We think of our northern neighbors as incorrigibly polite, their politics as moderate and their capital city — when we consider it at all — as boring, the Sacramento of the north.

What the Ambassador Bridge and other 'freedom convoy' blockades mean for Canada-U.S. trade

The Conversation, Sylvanus Kwaku Afesorgbor and Sunghun Lim 13 February 2022

Trade between Canada and the United States was hampered for almost a week by the blockade of the Ambassador Bridge at the Windsor-Detroit border as part of the so-called freedom convoy protest.

How truckers at the Ambassador Bridge hurt businesses, sparked protests around the world

Detroit Free Press, Adrienne Roberts, 12 February 2022

A few weeks ago, a protest by Canadian truckers over their country's vaccine mandate was barely on the radar of Michiganders, let alone people around the world.

Full Articles

As U.S. 'trucker convoy' picks up momentum, foreign meddling adds to fray

NBC News, Ben Collins, 11 February 2022

There is growing momentum in the U.S. anti-vaccination community to conduct rallies similar to Canada's "Freedom Convoy" that has paralyzed Ottawa, Ontario, and the effort is receiving a boost from a familiar source: overseas content mills.

Some Facebook groups that have promoted American "trucker convoys" similar to demonstrations that have clogged roads in Ottawa are being run by fake accounts tied to content mills in Vietnam, Bangladesh, Romania and several other countries, Facebook officials told NBC News on Friday.

The groups have popped up as extremism researchers have begun to warn that many anti-vaccine and conspiracy-driven communities in the U.S. are quickly pivoting to embrace and promote the idea of disruptive convoys.

Researchers at Harvard University's Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy first noted that large pro-Trump groups had been changing their names to go with convoy-related themes earlier this week. Grid News reported on Friday that one major trucker convoy Facebook group was being run by a Bangladesh content farm.

Many of the groups have changed names multiple times, going from those that tap hot-button political issues such as support for former President Donald Trump or opposition to vaccine mandates, to names with keywords like "trucker," "freedom" and "convoy." Facebook allows groups on its platforms to change names but tracks the changes in each page's "about" section.

The motivations of the people behind the content mills are not clear, but Joan Donovan, director of the Shorenstein Center, said the pattern fits existing efforts to make money off U.S. political divisions.

"In some ways, it's normal political activity," Donovan said. "In other ways, we have to look at how some of the engagement online is fake but can be a way to mobilize more people."

“When we see really effective disinformation campaigns, it’s when the financial and political motives align,” she added.

The groups frequently directed users away from Facebook toward websites that sold pro-Trump and anti-vaccine merchandise, a spokesperson for Meta, the parent company of Facebook, said. The spokesperson noted that the majority of the content posted in these groups came from real accounts and that the company has removed the groups tied to foreign content mills.

“Voicing opposition to government mandates is not against Meta’s policies,” the spokesperson said in a statement. “However, we have removed multiple groups and Pages for repeatedly violating our policies prohibiting QAnon content and those run by spammers in different countries around the world. We continue to monitor the situation and take action.”

The details of foreign interference come as anti-vaccine protesters, pro-Trump groups and QAnon supporters have shifted their full attention to making trucker convoys a reality on American roads. Anti-vaccine protesters, some of whom are truckers, have clogged roads in Ottawa for more than a week, demanding the Canadian government remove mask and vaccine mandates.

American far-right groups on Facebook, Telegram and the voice chat app Zello have aimed to replicate the demonstration in cities across the United States. People have passed around flyers in group chats urging truckers to stop traffic at this Sunday’s Super Bowl in Los Angeles, but the groups have found a three-day window to be too short for sufficient mobilization.

Discussion in the anti-vaccine communities has largely coalesced around a different date for road closures — March 5 — with plans for convoys headed toward Washington D.C. and Los Angeles in the days prior.

Major websites and social media accounts behind the anti-vaccine mandate protest that marched on Washington last month are rebranding as “trucker convoys,” part of a widespread effort to bring versions of Ottawa’s anti-vaccine road closures to American cities.

The official website for the “Defeat the Mandates” event has changed its homepage and is now advertising a trucker convoy in Southern California in March.

“There’s a misconception that every participant in these chats is a trucker, but that’s not true at all. It’s really anybody who’s been a part of these movements who’ve been waiting for an excuse to do something — QAnon, anti-vaccine, sovereign citizens,” said extremism researcher Sara Aniano, who recently published a report on QAnon’s growth after Jan. 6 for the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, a London-based nonprofit group. “This feels like the culmination of everything that’s happened since Jan. 6th.”

Social media-based foreign interference in domestic politics first came into public view in the aftermath of the 2016 election after researchers found that Russia’s Internet Research Agency was conducting an elaborate influence campaign across American social media sites in an effort to support candidate Donald Trump. Since then, foreign social media interference has been tempered by efforts by major social media platforms to crack down, though various influence operations are still frequently identified.

Donovan, of Harvard University’s Shorenstein Center, said Vietnamese spammers specifically sell what they call “Nick” accounts at scale, which are credible-seeming Facebook accounts that moderate high-profile groups.

Once purchased, the accounts and the groups they run can be used for any purpose, from selling T-shirts to executing a foreign influence campaign.

Some content mills even offer to help if Facebook takes action against a certain page or group.

“The fake account trade is alive and well,” Donovan said. “Really, they act as something like customer service. Whether it’s a person or an organization, if you bought an account from a person, and they do get taken away, you can contact him and he will reimburse you with more accounts. It has some dark marketing aspects to it.”

The point of renaming larger groups is not only to retain and spam the already-existing community but to also appear higher in Facebook’s search and recommendations bar, which helps lend credibility to those curious about the movement.

Facebook said it would “continue to monitor the situation” for more inauthentic activity.

“We continue to see scammers latch onto any hot-button issue that draws people’s attention, including the ongoing protests,” the Meta spokesperson said. “Over the past week, we’ve removed groups and Pages run by spammers from different countries around the world who used abusive tactics to mislead people about the origin and popularity of their content to drive them to off-platform websites to monetize ad clicks.”

Aniano, who said she recently spent several days listening in on audio chats in convoy-related Telegram groups, said the communities largely consist of a mishmash of anti-vaccine groups and QAnon supporters.

Aniano said the groups, which have tens of thousands of subscribers, flow between logistical discussions about essentials to bring on a long-haul car trip and getting followers up to date on QAnon-based conspiracy theories.

Crowdfunding site for Canadian ‘Freedom Convoy’ disabled in possible hack

Washington Post, Aaron Gregg, 14 February 2022

The fundraising website used to raise millions of dollars for a “Freedom Convoy” protest led by truckers against coronavirus restrictions in Canada is offline after reports of a possible hack that exposed donor information.

On Monday, a screenshot of the GiveSendGo website featured an image from the Disney film “Frozen,” along with a ticker purporting to show the names, donation amounts and email addresses of people who helped support the cause. The image bore the words “GiveSendGo is now frozen,” along with a link describing raw donation data.

A video captured by Canadian Broadcasting Corp. News reporter Travis Dhanraj shows scrolling text addressed to “GiveSendGo Grifters and Hatriots.”

“GiveSendGo has a history of providing a platform for individuals and organized groups to fund hate groups, promote disinformation and insurrection disguised as ‘protests,’” the video text read, an apparent reference to the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol. “Most of their larger campaigns are, in some way, a continuing threat to democracy.”

That image was later replaced with a page stating: “Application is under maintenance we will be back very soon.” As of 2 p.m. EST, the site was still down. GiveSendGo founder Jacob Wells did not respond to requests for comment.

It’s unclear who might be responsible for the apparent hack, which the company has yet to confirm. GiveSendGo said last week that it had been targeted by online attacks.

But text in the video tweeted by the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. reporter offered to provide journalists and researchers with the data in its entirety “so that the impact of foreign political

interference can be better understood and sensible, informed policy decisions can be made to defend against this growing threat.”

A separate post on the news leak website Distributed Denial of Secrets said it will make Freedom Convoy donor information available solely to journalists and researchers, including self-reported names, addresses, Zip codes, and IP addresses from the GiveSendGo platform as of Feb. 13. It offered 30 megabytes of information.

The GiveSendGo website has sparked concerns that foreign donors could be fueling demonstrations in Canada, where protests over coronavirus vaccine mandates for cross-border truckers have morphed into a broader movement against pandemic restrictions.

On Sunday, Ottawa declared a state of emergency as protesters blocked off streets and blared horns. Local police reported that 1,000 vehicles, 5,000 protesters and at least 300 counterprotesters had clogged city streets.

An Ontario court on Friday ordered demonstrators to end their blockade of a key bridge connecting Canada with the United States. Many protesters defied the order to suspend what local authorities have called a “siege” and “illegal occupation” by the Friday night deadline.

The protests have caused manufacturers on both sides of the crossing to curtail operations. U.S. automakers Ford and General Motors said they have cut production and canceled shifts at some sites, while a representative for Canadian carmakers told an Ontario court that the economic toll was nearly \$40 million per day.

Earlier this month, the crowdfunding site GoFundMe said it had removed a fundraiser supporting the convoy because it violated its terms of service, but an initial \$1 million had already been distributed. Donors then flocked to GiveSendGo, contributing close to \$9 million, Wells said on Fox News Sunday.

“People are vowing to never use GoFundMe again because of the ideological stances they’re taking,” Wells said. “We take a neutral position. We allow people to fundraise, period.”

Wells said money has been transferred to protest organizers in Canada from fundraising accounts linked on the site. He said his company is looking at “a wide variety of options” to get funding to them despite the court order there.

A review by The Washington Post showed that the self-described Christian website has become a refuge of sorts for outcasts and extremists, including fringe groups such as the Proud Boys and conspiracy theorists who seek to undercut the results of the 2020 election by promoting debunked claims of fraud. Some of the users claim to have been booted from other crowdfunding websites for violating terms of service.

Amarnath Amarasingam, a professor who studies religious political movements at Queen’s University in Ontario, said GiveSendGo has become the “go-to platform” for people who think their fundraising campaigns are going to be taken down. “Similar to what Gab or Parler became for online content,” Amarasingam said in an interview.

It garnered widespread publicity after raising funds for Kyle Rittenhouse, Amarasingam said. The teen was acquitted in November of all charges related to the 2020 shootings in Kenosha, Wis., that left two men dead and another wounded. The case set off national debates about guns, race, vigilantism and self-defense.

Other fundraising campaigns raised money for travel expenses, body armor and other financial assistance connected to “Stop the Steal” events, including the Jan. 6 rally in Washington that turned into a bloody attack on the U.S. Capitol.

The hack could play into concerns that international funders are contributing to a Canadian domestic dispute. Amarasingam said he conducted an initial analysis of the purported donor data and found that 56 percent of the more than 92,840 donors report U.S. Zip codes and 29 percent reported Canadian Zip codes. He emphasized, though, that the database has not been authenticated, and individually submitted Zip codes could be incorrect even if the data set came from GiveSendGo.

Angry truckers paralyzed Canada's capital. It could happen here too

LA Times, Doyle McManus, 13 February 2022

The pictures from Ottawa over the last two weeks have defied every American stereotype of Canadians. We think of our northern neighbors as incorrigibly polite, their politics as moderate and their capital city — when we consider it at all — as boring, the Sacramento of the north.

Suddenly, however, Ottawa has become the center of a global populist backlash against vaccine mandates and, more broadly, elitist liberal governments.

About 500 truckers angry about new border-crossing rules between Canada and the United States have occupied the city's central core.

They've been reinforced by thousands of other protesters, some waving Trump banners, swastika flags and placards with decidedly impolite epithets aimed at Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

The mayor and police chief, after 11 days of Canadian restraint, declared a state of emergency and asked the federal government for help, but protesters appear to be settling in — and planning on more.

For much of the last week, copycats blocked the most important land crossing between Canada and the United States, the Ambassador Bridge across the Detroit River, which normally carries almost one-third of the two countries' manufacturing trade. The effect on North America's supply chain was nearly instant; automotive factories from Ontario to Alabama cut production as they ran low on parts.

More copycat protests have sprung up from Australia to France, and U.S. groups say they are trying to organize a similar truck convoy from California to Washington.

The protesters' demands are often vague. In Ottawa, they ranged from an immediate end to all pandemic regulations to Trudeau's resignation. (The prime minister rejected both.) But the common threads are clear: anti-vaccine militancy and general anger at government, a stubborn package of populist libertarianism.

"Most of the protesters in Ottawa are not truckers at all," Martin Geoffroy, a scholar of Canadian extremist movements at Édouard-Montpetit College near Montreal, told me last week. "They include a collection of far-right movements which existed before the pandemic. All of them have one thing in common: They are opposed to the authorities."

Also, many of them admire former President Trump.

"What we're seeing is a spillover of Trumpism into Canada," he said. "We've seen Trump flags, QAnon flags, flags that say 'Don't tread on me.' These are American symbols, not Canadian."

The admiration runs both ways. "The Freedom Convoy is peacefully protesting the harsh policies of far left lunatic Justin Trudeau who has destroyed Canada with insane Covid mandates," Trump said in a written statement. (In fact, Canada has weathered the pandemic with a death rate roughly one-third of ours thanks largely to its higher vaccination rate.)

On Fox News, Tucker Carlson called the convoys the "single most successful human rights protest in a generation" and suggested the time might be ripe for similar actions south of the border.

“Most of the time, trends start in the United States and they move north to Canada,” he said. “But this time, the opposite could happen.”

Other American conservatives raised money — \$10 million by one estimate.

The protesters’ claims to speak for the average Canadian, however, are belied by polls showing that the truckers’ blockade was widely unpopular even before it began mucking with the supply chain.

In a survey by the Leger polling organization, 65% of respondents called the demonstrators a “small minority of Canadians who are thinking only about themselves.”

Only 32% said they supported the protesters’ demands — although 44% said they were sympathetic to their frustration (a quintessentially Canadian response).

Frank Graves, a pollster at Ekos Research in Ottawa, noted that sympathy for the protesters was strongest among conservatives, people in rural areas and people without a college education — all groups similar to Trump’s main backers in the United States.

As recently as 2020, Canadians expressed much higher trust in government than Americans. “That’s one of the reasons Canada did better in terms of vaccinations,” he said.

But as the pandemic has persisted, Canadians’ trust in their leaders has ebbed, and the differences between the two countries’ political cultures have narrowed.

“We’re moving closer, not farther apart,” he told me.

Canada’s Conservative Party has been moving rightward as well. Two weeks ago it dumped its last leader, Erin O’Toole, in part because his moderate tone was out of step with his party’s populist wing. (He also lost last year’s election to Trudeau.)

His interim successor, a Manitoba populist named Candice Bergen (not the star of “Murphy Brown”), was once photographed wearing a “Make America Great Again” cap. She embraced the truckers, hailing their “peaceful protest.”

But by the end of last week, Bergen, noticing that voters’ patience was running out, executed a U-turn.

“The time has come down to take down the barricades,” she said Thursday. “The economy you want to see reopened is hurting.”

Trump, Carlson and other U.S. conservatives may be cheering for the truckers now, when they’re disrupting lives a safe distance north of the border. They should be careful what they wish for.

What the Ambassador Bridge and other ‘freedom convoy’ blockades mean for Canada-U.S. trade

The Conversation, Sylvanus Kwaku Afesorgbor and Sunghun Lim 13 February 2022

Trade between Canada and the United States was hampered for almost a week by the blockade of the Ambassador Bridge at the Windsor-Detroit border as part of the so-called freedom convoy protest.

A court injunction was secured to end the blockade on Friday, but protesters remained for two days until police finally began to clear it of people and vehicles. The bridge re-opened late Sunday night.

There are increasing tensions in other parts of Canada, and similar blockades are likely to emerge, including at the Peace Bridge in the Niagara region. The movement has also gone international.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford declared a state of emergency aimed partly at the blockade at the Ambassador Bridge, one of the busiest bridges in North America and the No. 1 international border crossing in terms of trade volume and people each day.

Ford has introduced heavy fines of up to \$100,000, the confiscation of vehicles and the possibility of up to a year in prison for anyone blocking border crossings, 400-series highways, airports, ports, railways and pedestrian walkways.

The bridge accounts for nearly 30 per cent of annual trade between Canada and the U.S., amounting to a trade value of US\$323 million daily. The bridge is used by more than 40,000 commuters, tourists and truck drivers crossing each day.

Trump trade tensions

Because of trade tensions between the U.S. and Canada in recent years, the blockade was particularly concerning because it prolonged those tensions.

Former U.S. president Donald Trump created trade uncertainty during the renegotiation of NAFTA that almost led to the collapse of the only free-trade agreement in North America.

In addition, the Trump administration imposed tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum in 2018, forcing Canada to impose retaliatory tariffs on agri-food products from the U.S.

Since the Trump years, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted bilateral trade between the two countries because of border closures and ban of international travel at the peak of the pandemic.

Bilateral trade is highly sensitive to these types of disruptions as businesses factor such risk and uncertainty into cross-border trading decisions. If the risk they are exposed to is substantial, businesses are hesitant to engage in international trade.

For instance, recent research shows that the political tensions between the U.S. and Canada during the Trump administration created significant trade uncertainty, negatively impacting bilateral agri-food trade by reducing trade value between the U.S. and Canada.

The blockade and increased trade costs

Canada and the U.S. are natural trading partners by virtue of a shared border and similar consumer tastes and values. The two countries enjoy the largest bilateral trading relationship in the world.

Annually, more than two-thirds of the US\$511 billion in goods are transported by road. The Ambassador Bridge blockade increased the costs of this trade directly and indirectly.

The blockade was a direct disruption of an established trade channel, so goods scheduled to be transported had to wait or use alternative routes that were likely more expensive.

Indirectly, it also stirred uncertainty in bilateral trade relations and could have a damaging and prolonged impact. The blockade acted as an additional tariff or tax for businesses exporting or importing between the two countries.

Although there are more than 100 alternative land border crossings between the U.S. and Canada, costs can rise due to the expense and sometimes long delays spent determining and travelling to alternative routes.

The protests may also spill over to other U.S.-Canada border crossings that provide alternative routes. Already, Canadian protesters have caused border closures at Emerson, Man. and Coutts, Alta.

Alternative modes of transportation

A major alternative to land cross-border trade is seaport and air freight trade.

However, changing trade logistics from roads to ships is not an option for many companies or industries, and it's often infeasible due to the lack of refrigerating systems in containers.

Bilateral trade via ground shipping is also more economical compared to air freight, especially if countries share a common border and have an interconnected road network.

For highly perishable agricultural products like fresh fish or fruits, a higher shipment frequency is more important due to the importance of delivery time whereas size or volume is more important for traditional product shipments, since bigger deliveries can reduce transportation costs.

Trade volume by road

The U.S. and Canada have established the most enduring and lucrative trade partnership in the world. As of 2019, Canada was the largest export destination of American goods and the third-largest supplier of imported goods in the U.S.

Among all other traded goods, agricultural and food trade is of great importance. Canada is the second-largest U.S. agricultural export market, importing up to US\$22.1 billion amount goods in 2020.

The perishable nature of agri-food products makes any delay at borders costly to farmers and businesses. The bridge blockade disproportionately affected agricultural products compared to non-agricultural products.

Canada mainly imports processed foods that directly move from grocery shops to dinner tables, such as prepared foods (US\$2.1 billion), fresh vegetables (US\$1.8 billion), fresh fruit (\$1.5 billion), snack foods (\$1.3 billion) and non-alcoholic beverages (US\$1.0 billion).

Highly integrated supply chains and logistical advantages allow both countries to be strong trade partners in agri-food trade by ensuring the timely delivery of fresh foods and retail-ready goods.

Sectors and regions hard hit

Geographically, border blockades likely have a bigger impact on U.S. farming states with economies that are highly dependent on exporting to Canada, including North Dakota, Michigan, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota and Montana.

Similarly, Canadian provinces such as Prince Edward Island, Manitoba and Saskatchewan that are somewhat more dependent on primary or non-processed agri-food products, including grains, will also suffer heavily from border blockades.

The automobile industry across the U.S. and Canada felt the brunt of the Ambassador Bridge protest as major producers such as Toyota, Ford and General Motors closed down production plants. The auto industry sector in Canada and the U.S. is highly dependent on the North American supply chain in which different auto parts are produced across borders.

The auto industry also expressed concerns about potential job losses as a result of plants closures if the blockade continued..

Rising inflation in Canada and the U.S., triggered mostly by COVID-19 and climate change disruptions to supply chains, makes border blockades a major concern.

If not addressed speedily, blockades will cause food prices to soar even higher given the rise in general inflation is already expected to significantly impact food prices.

It may appear that border blockades are purely a Canadian political issue, but since it constitutes a barrier to two-way trade between the U.S. and Canada, it has implications for both countries. The integrated supply chain across both countries will be disrupted.

That's why the U.S. offered its assistance in ending the blockade at the Ambassador Bridge.

The Canadian government needs to work with the U.S. to end border blockades, particularly since Canadian protesters are being supported politically and financially by right-wing politicians and media in the U.S.

How truckers at the Ambassador Bridge hurt businesses, sparked protests around the world

Detroit Free Press, Adrienne Roberts, 12 February 2022

A few weeks ago, a protest by Canadian truckers over their country's vaccine mandate was barely on the radar of Michiganders, let alone people around the world.

But then the protest came to Windsor, a city just across the river from Detroit, stopping travel across the Ambassador Bridge, one of the busiest commercial arteries between the two countries.

Within days, Michigan political leaders had called on Canada to swiftly end the protest that blocked Canada-bound travel.

It's estimated that by Thursday, the U.S. automotive and transportation industry had lost \$51 million in wages when needed parts for new vehicles could not get to factories, for example, shutting some down, according to The Anderson Economic Group.

With automakers cutting shifts and losses adding up, U.S. Rep. Elissa Slotkin, D-Holly, reiterated calls for the U.S. to rely less on international trade: "The one thing that couldn't be more clear is that we have to bring American manufacturing back home to states like Michigan," Slotkin said in a Wednesday Tweet.

Despite these protectionist calls by Slotkin and others, some Americans were happy to join in the attention garnered by Canadian truckers, sharing their anger over vaccines, COVID-19 restrictions and general pandemic fatigue, and planning similar protests in the U.S.

Right-wing pundits and other conservatives quickly latched on to the protests, pushing plans for a so-called Freedom Convoy starting at the Super Bowl as well as similar protests around the world.

"They've sort of coopted this set of grievances among the truckers in Canada," Libby Hemphill, an associate professor of information at the University of Michigan said of the people who have supported the protest.

That's true, too, of elected officials such as U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, who has called the truckers "heroes" and "patriots," Republican Michigan gubernatorial hopeful James Craig and commentators on Fox News.

Hemphill likened the support for the truckers' protest to one fan at a basketball game starting to yell "Defense!" and clapping, and soon, many fans are doing the same.

"What social media allows us to do is to hear other people shouting 'defense,' to hear them clapping and to feel that momentum," she said. "That makes us feel like we're a part of this crowd and we have a mission, even if the mission went a little sideways of where we were headed."

How the 'Freedom Convoy' got its start

The protest was originally aimed at eliminating vaccine-related border mandates imposed by the Canadian government. Long-haul truck driver demonstrations began late last month in Ottawa, Canada's capital.

Then it turned into an international affair with shutdowns or slowdowns at major gateways in Detroit and Port Huron between the U.S. and Canada.

On Friday, an Ontario judge granted an injunction, making continued blocking of bridge traffic a criminal act. Although police moved in Friday night and pushed protesters back and concrete barricades were erected, as of Saturday evening, the bridge remained closed and the police and protesters remained in a peaceful standoff.

The Canadian truckers are calling themselves the Freedom Convoy. In Paris, trucks arrived from southern France on Wednesday mimicking the same tactics, with protesters there using the name Convoi de la Liberté, which means the same thing in French.

In the U.S., people organized on social media under the name Convoy to DC 2022, with more than 27,000 members on Facebook, and some are rumored to be planning to disrupt the Super Bowl, which is being played Sunday in California.

Quick impact

The impact of the Ambassador Bridge shutdown was felt almost immediately. About 10,000 commercial vehicles cross the bridge each day with \$325 million worth of goods, the Michigan Department of Treasury estimates. Nearly 30% of the annual trade between Michigan and Canada crosses the Ambassador Bridge, which is privately owned by the Moroun family.

The shutdown has been a serious headache not just for businesses but for the Biden administration, which has already had a somewhat fractious relationship with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government. Trudeau and the Canadians last year balked at Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's efforts to shut down Line 5, a major oil pipeline connecting Canada to the Great Lakes states — and invoked a 45-year-old U.S.-Canadian treaty to keep that from happening.

He complained loudly when Biden and other Democrats called for electric vehicle incentives for consumers that would be worth more for cars and trucks made solely in the U.S. without any Canadian content — a provision which could be in violation of the new U.S.-Mexico-Canadian Free Trade Agreement.

That said, the current crisis is one in which the U.S. and Canada are aligned, since both nations require truckers from the other to be vaccinated (the U.S. put that requirement in place last month). The Biden administration immediately saw the potential damage that could be caused by a prolonged shutdown of the Ambassador Bridge, especially at a time when supply chains are already slow-moving and inflation has been steadily climbing over the last year as demand outpaces supply, pushing prices up.

Why truckers? There's a reason.

It's not accidental that truckers are the center of these protests. Although the Teamsters Union has denounced this protest, the union representing truck drivers and other related industries, historically speaking, had immense bargaining power, because of its size and its ability to stop shipments of essential goods.

While the Teamsters Union is still one of the largest unions in the world, its influence, like that of other unions, has waned until recently, as workers have gained more bargaining power because of labor shortages.

But throughout much of the past few years, truck drivers and their struggles working in a pandemic had largely gone under the radar compared with the headlines grocery store workers and other essential workers, and those working in public-facing industries such as restaurants and hotels, received.

They're also workers many people have a lot of empathy for, said Kjerstin Thorson, an associate professor in the Department of Advertising and Public Relations at Michigan State University who researches the role of social media in political engagement.

"These are truckers, they're trying to do their jobs, and there's an appeal there," Thorson said.

It's not just the nature of the work that has led to the proliferation of this protest across social media, though. The photos of trucks blocking traffic come into play, too.

"The imagery of big trucks together is powerful," she said. "If you're scrolling through a feed, it's arresting and it makes you go, 'What is that? What's happening?' That sense of curiosity leads to clicks."

The timing is significant

It's no coincidence, either, Hemphill said, that this protest took off when it did, two years into the pandemic.

"Everyone's patience is drained," she said. "Our ability to make sacrifices for the common good is diminished. 'How long can we keep doing this and keep feeling tired?' But we still need to do it to keep each other safe."

Much of how this protest is playing out on social media, though, isn't unique.

And given that the number of truckers who are against the vaccine mandate and are protesting is likely small — the Canadian Trucking Alliance said it doesn't support the protest and Trudeau has said 90% of truckers in Canada are vaccinated — social media can quickly make the movement bigger by broadening the coalition.

"Social media reduces the costs of both finding those like-minded (people) as well as coordinating with them to engage in action," Lampe said.

But the social media spread isn't

He compared the spread of this protest to Arab Spring protests, which proliferated across much of the Arab world in the early 2010s, and Occupy Wall Street, a protest movement against economic inequality and the influence of money in politics that spread across the U.S. and to other countries.

"In some ways, social media is a furnace for both good and bad ideas," he said. "The technology moves across borders and is independent of kind of the curation lens of traditional media. It's less controllable by governments."

Furthermore, the protesters don't even need to necessarily be totally aligned in what they believe. Before the advent of social media, people had to sit in a room together and come to an agreement on what the problem was and what they wanted to do about it.

"That kept movements fairly focused," Thorson said. "But online, you don't have to be best friends with the person organizing it. You don't even necessarily have to show up in person to be part of amplifying it."

Aiming to build sympathy

Lampe said these actions, ultimately, are all aimed at building sympathy.

"People who are sympathetic to the cause may not park their car on a bridge or donate money, but they see this move and say, 'I understand their frustration,' " he said.

That widens the Overton window, a narrow range of beliefs or behaviors that are considered normative in society, to make extreme beliefs more acceptable and to help justify actions.

It's possible, though, that sympathy may end up with the plant workers whose shifts were cut and the small manufacturers who don't know how much longer they can stay in business if they can't get products across the Ambassador Bridge, for example.

"It's going to be interesting long term to see who gets the sympathy in public opinion as these protests draw to a close, at least locally," Thorson said.

More:Ford, Toyota see more production disruption as bridge protest continues

More:Whitmer: Michigan ready to step up, but it's up to Canada to end bridge protest

While the Canadian government made moves to end the protest, similar protests around the world are just getting started.

"Given that the activists met on social media and the way it is spreading across the networks, I anticipate that we're at the beginning of this, not the end," Lampe said.

From: Lambo, Pam -WSHDC -WS -PA

Sent: February 14, 2022 12:49 PM

To: Loken, Martin -WSHDC -GR <Martin.Loken@international.gc.ca>; McIntyre, Graeme -WSHDC -GR <Graeme.McIntyre@international.gc.ca>; Holmes, Michael -WSHDC -GR <Michael.Holmes@international.gc.ca>; Maisonneuve, Mélanie -WSHDC -BF <Melanie.Maisonneuve@international.gc.ca>; Kiameh, Madeleine -WSHDC -BF <Madeleine.Kiameh@international.gc.ca>; Fanning, Tammy -WSHDC -BF <Tammy.Fanning@international.gc.ca>; Stendardo, Frank -WSHDC -TD <Frank.Stendardo@international.gc.ca>; 'Arseneau, Michel' <michel.arseneau@rcmp-grc.gc.ca>; 'McGraw, Mathews' <mathews.mcgraw@rcmp-grc.gc.ca>; Gordon, Sean -WSHDC -PL <Sean.Gordon@international.gc.ca>; Castella, Alain -WSHDC -BF <Alain.Castella@international.gc.ca>
Cc: Baird, Katherine -WSHDC -DHOM/CDMA <Katherine.Baird@international.gc.ca>; Grant, Heather -WSHDC -WS <Heather.Grant@international.gc.ca>; Bélanger, Jérôme -WSHDC -GR <Jerome.Belanger@international.gc.ca>; *WSHDC-Media Relations <D-WSHDC-MediaRelations@international.gc.ca>; Parsons, Alanna -NGB <Alanna.Parsons@international.gc.ca>; Barratt, Adam -WSHDC -WS <Adam.Barratt@international.gc.ca>; Boudreau, Wendy -WSHDC -WS <Wendy.Boudreau@international.gc.ca>; Maron, Stefano -WSHDC -WS <Stefano.Maron@international.gc.ca>; Fisher, Dani -MNPLS -GR <dani.fisher@international.gc.ca>; Connell, Christine -DTROT -GR <Christine.Connell@international.gc.ca>; Denter, Christian -NGB <Christian.Denter@international.gc.ca>; Beaulieu, Sebastien -NGA <Sebastien.Beaulieu@international.gc.ca>

Subject: 2022-02-14: U.S. media roll-up: "Freedom Convoy" Protest (as of 11:30amET)

US media articles below (and attached)

Michigan Governor Whitmer: "It's important to ensure that this does not happen again. I will work to protect the economic freedom and well-being of families and businesses in Michigan". (taken from attached Feb 14 statement)

ATTACHED: Twitter snapshot and congressional reactions

Dustin Lowe, a truck driver in Colorado: "Let 'em blow" (referencing truckers' horns in Ottawa), "Finally got something loud enough they can hear. They need to pay attention to the little guy; we're the ones that make the world go round".

Rep Jim Jordan (R-Ohio): "They are so sick of the double standard, so sick of the mandates. What they want is what God gave them. Freedom. That's what this is all about. God bless those truckers for standing firm".

With the re-opening of the Ambassador Bridge, there is a noticeable shift in US reporting about what's next for this growing number of frustrated Americans who are pandemic-fatigued and "want mandates gone". There are more and more articles about how social media is helping to organize the thousands of followers of groups like, "Convoy to save America" and "The People's Convoy". The *Detroit Free Press* quotes several local university professors who make relevant points, "Social media reduces the costs of both finding those like-minded (people) as well as coordinating with them to engage in action"; "The imagery of big trucks together is powerful...that sense of curiosity leads to clicks"; "In some ways, social media is a furnace for both good and bad ideas. The technology moves across borders and its less controllable by governments".

Regional media are telling more stories about how local Americans are "stocking their SUVs" with food and supplies in anticipation of joining a convoy to major cities across America. There are also articles about local U.S. communities -- both close and far from the U.S. border with Canada, where they are passing the basket, taking up donations and even collecting loose change for all truckers -- some would argue a work around for the shutdown of GoFundMe.

Beyond the mention of DHS and law enforcement's watch of the situation and exchanges between Canadian and US national security advisors, there is very little substantive U.S. media reporting about the security aspects of the situation unfolding in the United States. Over the weekend, during a FOX News interview, Donald Trump added that the United States is "far more of a tinderbox than Canada".

Abbreviated Articles

Canada truckers want freedom, not a global world where elites control their lives

Fox News, David Marcus, 14 February 2022

On the ground in Ottawa the trucker protest in the shadow of the nation's Parliament building looks like no other protest witnessed in recent memory.

Rand Paul said he hopes trucker protests 'clog up cities,' including during Super Bowl and in DC

CNN, Sonnet Swire, 12 February 2022

While protests by truckers and others against Covid mandates continue to occupy Canada's capital, block US-Canada border crossings and add to supply chain headaches, Republican Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky said he hopes trucker protests come to the United States as soon as this weekend to "clog up" major US cities.

U.S. accounts drive Canadian convoy protest chatter

Axios, Ashley Gold, 14 February 2022

Known U.S.-based sources of misleading information have driven a majority of Facebook and Twitter posts about the Canadian COVID-19 vaccine mandate protest, per German Marshall Fund data shared exclusively with Axios.

The Canadian truckers are 'MAD'

The Hill, Harlan Ullman, 14 February 2022

The several hundred Canadian truckers blocking the roads and bridges crossing into Detroit and other parts of Michigan and the U.S. are MAD. No, not mad as in insane or angry; instead, they are the new MAD, which stands for "massive attacks of disruption."

Full Articles

Canada truckers want freedom, not a global world where elites control their lives

Fox News, David Marcus, 14 February 2022

On the ground in Ottawa the trucker protest in the shadow of the nation's Parliament building looks like no other protest witnessed in recent memory.

The large powerful machines of commerce and the highways of North America are lined up along with Canadians and their Maple Leaf flags demanding the right to work under their own conditions. If it doesn't look much like a protest, that's because in many ways it isn't, it's more like a strike.

Protest almost always implies a threat. The threat of Occupy Wall Street or Seattle's CHOP zone was that people will ignore the laws and rules of society. The threat of the BLM riots in the summer of 2020 was that if demands were not met buildings would burn. The threat in Ottawa is of a different order, these people are threatening not to work.

Nobody much cares if an anarchist protester decides not to go to their job as a furry friendly sex worker, or barista at the communist coffee collective, or Ivy League teaching assistant. But if men and women stop driving their trucks then everything, every product, every service, every object we reach for will be affected. The truckers even fit the physical image of a classic strike, all they need, to this New Yorker's eyes, is a giant inflatable rat.

Meanwhile, the Canadian government and their lackeys in the American media have begun to play their role as strikebreakers. Last week the truckers were all supposedly white supremacists or enablers of white supremacy. Like the rhetorical version of a piece of undercooked pasta tossed at the wall, that didn't stick at all. So now they have moved to the classic anti strike language of "outside agitators."

Now we are told all of these thick accented, flag waving Canadians are just dupes for nefarious American interests. This is a very old playbook, take this entry from the Canadian Encyclopedia about the 1919 general strike in Winnipeg, detractors "called the strike a revolutionary plot led by a small group of "alien scum." Winnipeg's leading newspapers took this view, too. In reality, there was little evidence that the strike was started by Bolsheviks and immigrants from Eastern Europe."

So is it here, in Ottawa. It is completely obvious from seeing and chatting with those here on the ground that this is not some American Trojan horse meant to infect the Great White North with Trumpism. The temperature is literally zero, which feels more like a punishment than weather, and these folks are taking selfies and dancing to Rick Astley.

No, Ottawa is not "under siege." I coursed into town, a block from Parliament Hill in an Uber that faced no traffic at all. Most stores and restaurants closest to the events are closed, but that is just a small chunk of this city, and a block away it seems to be business as usual, at least the pandemic version with its "For Lease" signs on closed businesses.

My driver told me that "of course we should be vaccinated and wear masks, but we need our freedom." He supports the truckers, though he is by no means a vaccine or COVID denier.

The left, in both Canada and the United States used to like it when the workers of the world united, or at least they claimed to. But this time it's a little different. This time the neoliberals are learning that Western workers don't want a global world in which elites mandate the actions and lifestyles of the people.

The workers want freedom. And as this protest, or strike, or whatever we choose to call it spreads across the world, our leaders cannot help but sit up and take notice.

Rand Paul said he hopes trucker protests 'clog up cities,' including during Super Bowl and in DC

CNN, Sonnet Swire, 12 February 2022

While protests by truckers and others against Covid mandates continue to occupy Canada's capital, block US-Canada border crossings and add to supply chain headaches, Republican Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky said he hopes trucker protests come to the United States as soon as this weekend to "clog up" major US cities.

Asked by The Daily Signal about his thoughts on the convoy and the potential for it to spill over into Los Angeles, home of Sunday's Super Bowl, or into the nation's capital, Paul said Thursday that "it'd be great" if the anti-mandate, truck-inspired protests popped in the United States to "clog things up."

"I'm all for it," Paul, a longtime opponent to masking and vaccine mandates, told the conservative media outlet. "Civil disobedience is a time-honored tradition in our country, from slavery to civil rights, to you name it. Peaceful protest, clog things up, make people think about the mandates."

He added: "I hope the truckers do come to America, and I hope they clog up cities."

Paul's office did not immediately respond to CNN's request for comment.

The convoy in Canada, which started as a protest of US and Canadian rules requiring truckers crossing the border to be fully vaccinated, has disrupted the capital of Ottawa as part of a broader movement against mandates. Protests have blockaded notable US-Canada border crossings, such as the Ambassador Bridge, a key trade corridor linking Windsor, Ontario, to Detroit, and inspired similar protests abroad.

The threat of truckers potentially clogging US roads was elevated on Tuesday when the Department of Homeland Security distributed a bulletin to law enforcement agencies, CNN previously reported. DHS warned that a convoy of protesting truckers "will potentially begin in California as early as mid-February and arrive in Washington, DC, as late as mid-March."

Meanwhile, the Canadian protests are already affecting Americans and the US economy. Workers in the Michigan auto industry could lose up to \$51 million in wages this week due to the trucker protest at the US-Canada border, according to Anderson Economic Group.

Three big US business groups have warned the protests are putting further stress on an already struggling supply chain. In a joint statement earlier this week, the US Chamber of Commerce, Business Roundtable and National Association of Manufacturers called on the Canadian government "to act swiftly to address the disruption to the flow of trade." Auto industry trade groups also warned the protests were causing "additional strain."

U.S. accounts drive Canadian convoy protest chatter

Axios, Ashley Gold, 14 February 2022

Known U.S.-based sources of misleading information have driven a majority of Facebook and Twitter posts about the Canadian COVID-19 vaccine mandate protest, per German Marshall Fund data shared exclusively with Axios.

Driving the news: Ottawa's "Freedom Convoy" has ballooned into a disruptive political protest against Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and inspired support among right-wing and anti-vaccine mandate groups in the U.S.

- Canadian police said Sunday they arrested protesters to break up the convoy, clearing them from the U.S.-Canada border crossing.

Why it matters: Trending stories about the protest appear to be driven by a small number of voices as top-performing accounts with huge followings are using the protest to drive engagement and inflame emotions with another hot-button issue.

- "They can flood the zone — making something news and distorting what appears to be popular," said Karen Kornbluh, senior fellow and director of the Digital Innovation and Democracy Initiative at the German Marshall Fund.

What they're saying: "The three pages receiving the most interactions on [convoy protest] posts — Ben Shapiro, Newsmax and Breitbart —are American," Kornbluh said. Other pages with the most action on convoy-related posts include Fox News, Dan Bongino and Franklin Graham.

- "These major online voices with their bullhorns determine what the algorithm promotes because the algorithm senses it is engaging," she said.
- Using a platform's design to orchestrate anti-government action mirrors how the "Stop the Steal" groups worked around the Jan. 6 Capitol riot, with a few users quickly racking up massive followings, Kornbluh said.

By the numbers: Per German Marshall Fund data, from Jan. 22, when the protests began, to Feb. 12, there were 14,667 posts on Facebook pages about the Canadian protests, getting 19.3 million interactions (including likes, comments and shares).

- For context: The Beijing Olympics had 20.9 million interactions in that same time period.
- On Twitter, from Feb. 3 to Feb. 13, tweets about the protests from have been favorited at least 4.1 million times and retweeted at least 1.1 million times.
- Pro-convoy videos on YouTube have racked up 47 million views, with Fox News' YouTube page getting 29.6 million views on related videos.
- The big picture: New research published in the Atlantic finds that most public activity on Facebook comes from a "tiny, hyperactive group of abusive users."
- Since user engagement remains the most important factor in Facebook's weighting of content recommendations, the researchers write, the most abusive users will wield the most influence over the online conversation.
- "Overall, we observed 52 million users active on these U.S. pages and public groups, less than a quarter of Facebook's claimed user base in the country," the researchers write. "Among this publicly active minority of users, the top 1 percent of accounts were responsible for 35 percent of all observed interactions; the top 3 percent were responsible for 52 percent. Many users, it seems, rarely, if ever, interact with public groups or pages."

Meanwhile, Foreign meddling is further confusing the narrative around the trucker protest.

- NBC News reported that overseas content mills in Vietnam, Bangladesh, Romania and other countries are powering Facebook groups promoting American versions of the trucker convoys. Facebook took many of the pages down.
- A report from Grid News found a Bangladeshi digital marketing firm was behind two of the largest Facebook groups related to the Canadian Freedom Convoy before being removed from the platform.
- Grid News reported earlier that Facebook groups supporting the Canadian convoy were being administered by a hacked Facebook account belonging to a Missouri woman.

The Canadian truckers are 'MAD'

The Hill, Harlan Ullman, 14 February 2022

The several hundred Canadian truckers blocking the roads and bridges crossing into Detroit and other parts of Michigan and the U.S. are MAD. No, not mad as in insane or angry; instead, they are the new MAD, which stands for "massive attacks of disruption."

These types of protests are not new. Sit-ins, strikes, boycotts, marches and other disruptive tactics to seek political change are as old as civilization.

But today's disruptions are tectonically different. The reasons are the subject of my new book, "The Fifth Horseman and the New MAD: How Massive Attacks of Disruption Have Become the Looming Existential Danger to a Divided Nation and the World at Large."

A curious thing happened to society as it grew more advanced and modern in terms of the sophistication and extraordinary improvements of standards of living for most citizens. For every advance driven by technology, the diffusion of power and globalization, new vulnerabilities, weaknesses, dependencies and interdependencies were created.

Take supply chains and just-in-time specifications to maximize efficiency and cut costs.

A ship grounds in the Suez Canal for 10 days, and massive global interruptions break out. A plant manufacturing computer chips experiences a slow down due to COVID-19 cases and auto production lines shut down. A pipeline carrying gasoline that supplies most of northeast America is hacked and motorists are unable to fill up their cars.

About one quarter of U.S.-Canadian trade flows over the 1.6-mile-long Ambassador Bridge, or just under half-a-billion dollars a day. Already Ford and Toyota automobile makers are cutting back for lack of parts. Given the soaring inflation and other economic issues facing America and reflected in a volatile and unpredictable stock market that appears particularly out of control, this trucker disruption is no longer a protest. It could have profound legal and economic implications if it persists.

Suppose this blockade goes on for days or weeks and other blockades spring up. But if real economic damage results – as with the steel strike in 1952 and the air traffic controllers in 1981 – the situation could become violent.

The larger problem is that MAD is potentially existential. The COVID-19 pandemic is on its way to causing 1 million American deaths — more than the number of Americans killed on every battlefield this country has fought since 1775. Or suppose the pandemic migrates to animal and plant life, threatening food supplies. Perhaps the most immediate form of MAD has to do with the U.S. government failing to provide what Americans need or demand.

A small example: Congress passed and the president signed the desperately needed \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill. How much has been allocated? Zero. Why? Congress had been unable to pass a budget for the fiscal year that began on Oct. 1, 2021.

The Canadian truckers' blockade represents a far more serious threat than the disruption that will follow. Multiply the possibilities and then add other disruptors that may have even more dangerous consequences to include climate change causing extreme storms, floods, drought, fires, heat and cold; cyberattacks; social media; terror; debt; and, perhaps most interestingly, drones. Imagine the carnage last Jan. 6 had protestors flown drones armed with explosives into the Capitol.

The warnings are too obvious and numerous to be ignored or dismissed. No matter how challenging states such as China, Russia, Iran and North Korea may be, as well as non-state actors, the new danger is “the fifth horseman” – complementing the four other riders of the Apocalypse: war, death, pestilence and destruction – armed with the new MAD.

Seventy-five years ago, a Cold War was about to break out between East and West. With the advent of nuclear and thermonuclear weapons, a hot war was checked by the old MAD of mutual assured destruction and the Armageddon that would have destroyed much of mankind and the world. Today, a new MAD is the specter haunting us. Unlike the old one, it cannot be deterred.

If we are smart and recognize this danger and its consequences, MAD can be reduced, contained and possibly prevented. Canadian truckers are driving this point home now. But will we listen? And will we act in time?

From: Lambo, Pam -WSHDC -WS -PA

Sent: February 11, 2022 4:04 PM

To: Loken, Martin -WSHDC -GR <Martin.Loken@international.gc.ca>; McIntyre, Graeme -WSHDC -GR <Graeme.McIntyre@international.gc.ca>; Holmes, Michael -WSHDC -GR <Michael.Holmes@international.gc.ca>; Maisonneuve, Mélanie -WSHDC -BF <Melanie.Maisonneuve@international.gc.ca>; Kiameh, Madeleine -WSHDC -BF <Madeleine.Kiameh@international.gc.ca>; Fanning, Tammy -WSHDC -BF

<Tammy.Fanning@international.gc.ca>; Stendardo, Frank -WSHDC -TD
<Frank.Stendardo@international.gc.ca>; 'Arseneau, Michel' <michel.arseneau@rcmp-grc.gc.ca>;
'McGraw, Mathews' <mathews.mcgraw@rcmp-grc.gc.ca>; Gordon, Sean -WSHDC -PL
<Sean.Gordon@international.gc.ca>; Castella, Alain -WSHDC -BF
<Alain.Castella@international.gc.ca>
Cc: Baird, Katherine -WSHDC -DHOM/CDMA <Katherine.Baird@international.gc.ca>; Grant, Heather
-WSHDC -WS <Heather.Grant@international.gc.ca>; Bélanger, Jérôme -WSHDC -GR
<Jerome.Belanger@international.gc.ca>; *WSHDC-Media Relations <D-WSHDC-MediaRelations@international.gc.ca>; Parsons, Alanna -NGB <Alanna.Parsons@international.gc.ca>;
Barratt, Adam -WSHDC -WS <Adam.Barratt@international.gc.ca>; Boudreau, Wendy -WSHDC -WS
<Wendy.Boudreau@international.gc.ca>; Maron, Stefano -WSHDC -WS
<Stefano.Maron@international.gc.ca>; Fisher, Dani -MNPLS -GR <dani.fisher@international.gc.ca>;
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Subject: 2022-02-11: U.S. media roll-up: "Freedom Convoy" Protest (as of 3pmET)

New set of articles below (and attached)

Of note this afternoon: PM and POTUS spoke (WH readout below); PM Trudeau held a press conference (transcript attached); US Chamber of Commerce issued statement, *Business leaders urge resolution of US-Canada Border Blockade*

Attached: Reactions from Governors/States and updated Twitter snapshot

At today's WH press briefing, Jen Psaki confirmed that PM Trudeau and President Biden spoke today regarding the ongoing protest and multiple border closures. She was asked what the President is doing to help alleviate the blockades at the border and trade issues stemming from this—she noted the US (from the President down) have been in direct touch with their Canadian counterparts to address the blockades and the challenges they are posing to the supply chain. She noted while Administration believes in the ability to protest, it has the potential to have a huge impact on workers and the American public. As far as helping to alleviate the situation, the US is helping to create detour routes to cross the border. Regarding reports of a similar "Freedom Convoy" arriving in DC sometime in March, she noted that DHS is aware and is taking steps to make sure it does not disrupt lawful trade and transportation or interfere with the federal government or law enforcement. Regarding reports that a "Freedom Convoy" could begin in Los Angeles and potentially disrupt the Super Bowl, DHS is surging additional staff to the area.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 11, 2022

Readout of President Biden's Call With Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada

Today President Biden spoke with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada to discuss the ongoing blockade of key bridges and crossings between the United States and Canada, including Detroit/Windsor, Sweetwater/Coutts, and Pembina/Emerson. The two leaders agreed that the actions of the individuals who are obstructing travel and commerce between our two countries are having significant direct impacts on citizens' lives and livelihoods. The President expressed his concern that U.S. companies and workers are experiencing serious effects, including slowdowns in production, shortened work hours, and plant closures. The Prime Minister promised quick action in enforcing the law, and the President thanked him for the steps he and other Canadian authorities are taking to restore the open passage of bridges to the United States. In turn, the Prime Minister thanked the President and his administration, the Governor of Michigan, and US officials for all of the assistance that the United States is providing to resolve this disruption. The two leaders agreed to stay in close touch in the days ahead to ensure that the free flow of traffic is restored at these vital transit points.

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Abbreviated Articles

Ontario premier declares emergency, tells truckers to go home and end protest

NBC News, David K. Li, 11 February 2022

Ontario Premier Doug Ford declared a state of emergency on Friday and said he'll use all government resources to end a two-week protest by Canadian truckers over Covid-19 rules.

Canada's Trucker Protests Could Spread

The Atlantic, David Frum, 11 February 2022

Within a week of the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, demonstrators were marching in the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Canada, Australia, and many other countries. The European and Asian protesters mimicked the style and symbolism of the protests in the United States: taking a knee, pulling down statues. In the social-media age, all protests are potentially global.

The Canadian trucker convoy is an unpopular uprising

Vox, Zack Beauchamp, 11 February 2022

Since January 28, Canada's capital city of Ottawa has been under siege by a convoy of angry truckers — a two-week running protest that has drawn support from right-wing extremists in Canada and abroad.

Canadian trucker protest: A day in the life

Fox Business, Kristen Altus, 11 February 2022

In the early morning hours on Friday, Ottawa's Ambassador Bridge was quiet, with not many people in sight. Instead, the low hums of semi-trucks gently rattled the streets surrounding Canada's Parliament.

The Canadian protesters aren't just truckers. Here's who has been showing up and what they want

CNN, Paula Newton, 11 February 2022

A massive protest by Canadian truckers and others against Covid-19 mandates has been growing for weeks, crippling three US border crossings and downtown Ottawa -- with no end in sight.

Full Articles

Ontario premier declares emergency, tells truckers to go home and end protest

NBC News, David K. Li, 11 February 2022

Ontario Premier Doug Ford declared a state of emergency on Friday and said he'll use all government resources to end a two-week protest by Canadian truckers over Covid-19 rules.

Ford said the trucker protest amounts to a "siege" of downtown Ottawa and the Ambassador Bridge, which connects Windsor and Detroit.

"It's an illegal occupation," Ford told reporters. "This is no longer a protest."

Ford told protesters to go home and threatened heavy fines — but stopped just short of saying he's ordering immediate police action to clear streets.

"I want to make it very clear that I do not, I repeat do not, direct the police," Ford said.

"We make the laws. The police enforce the laws. But again we cannot ... have people occupying cities, holding them hostage, holding millions and millions of people hostage to go to their jobs and tens and tens and tens of thousands of people (who) cannot go do their job."

Truckers had been staging a protest that had shut down Ottawa's core over various Covid-19 rules, leading the mayor of Canada's capital to declare a city state of emergency on Sunday.

Dubbed the "Freedom Convoy," hundreds of protesters have been using their trucks to block city streets, blare their horns and disrupt traffic.

Ford, the brother of late former Toronto Mayor Rob Ford, said he respects the right of truckers to protests, "but like all rights, these are not without reasonable limits."

"There is a wide difference between a demonstration that people make their point and go home and people (who) put their lives, their family's lives and communities at risk," Ontario Solicitor General Sylvia Jones said.

"That's unfortunately what we are now seeing in Windsor and of course in Ottawa for the last number of days, over a week."

Bridge traffic has been blocked or severely restricted for five days, leading to serious economic consequences south of the border, Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer said.

"In Michigan, our economic momentum is at risk because commercial traffic is at a standstill at the Ambassador Bridge and heavily backed up at the Blue Water Bridge," she said in a statement on Friday. "I'm continuing to take action to ensure Michigan workers and families are supported."

The protest has also sparked backlash in both Ottawa and across Canada over alleged harassment as well as the presence of Confederate flags and flags bearing swastikas.

A slim majority of Canadians do not back the truckers' actions, according to an Ipsos poll.

Canada's Trucker Protests Could Spread

The Atlantic, David Frum, 11 February 2022

Within a week of the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, demonstrators were marching in the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Canada, Australia, and many other countries. The European and Asian protesters mimicked the style and symbolism of the protests in the United States: taking a knee, pulling down statues. In the social-media age, all protests are potentially global.

So it is now, with this month's protests in Canada, in which truckers opposed to that country's vaccination requirements have besieged the national capital and blockaded international crossings crucial to Canada's economy. The truck-blockade movement that started in Canada is being mimicked in New Zealand, France, and Belgium. U.S. law enforcement is bracing for somebody to try something similar south of the border on Super Bowl Sunday, of all holy days. Much of the money donated in support of the Canadian protests has been raised internationally, especially in the United States. Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, Senator Ted Cruz of Texas, and presidential son Donald Trump Jr. are only some of the Republicans who have voiced support for the protesters. The style and symbolism of this event, too, seem strangely nonlocal. One of the most photographed movements of the protests has been a man on horseback hoisting a trump 2024 flag in downtown Ottawa. Confederate flags and MAGA hats have been adopted into a global library of anti-establishment iconography.

The effects of the protests are becoming global too. Trucks are obstructing the Ambassador Bridge between Windsor, Ontario, and Detroit. That's the busiest of all the border crossings between the United States and Canada, crucial to moving auto parts. Obstructions have been reported at border crossings in Alberta and Manitoba as well. Another convoy is trying to impede the main road from Manitoba to Ontario. Yesterday, protesters attempted to block access to Ottawa's airport.

The blockades are very much a rogue movement. They have been condemned by the Canadian Trucking Alliance and Canada's Teamsters Union. About 90 percent of Canadian truck drivers are vaccinated; comparatively few of those protesting are professional truck drivers. The protesters are not anti-lockdown. They are anti-vaccination. The spark for the protests was a requirement that truckers be vaccinated to cross the U.S.-Canada border. This is not a movement of "working class" protesters against remote, affluent elites. The burden of the protests has fallen on Ottawa residents, whose streets have been paralyzed, and Canadian autoworkers, who face factory shutdowns because of cross-border disruptions.

About 32 percent of Canadians express broad sympathy with the protests. That's not popularity, but it's not crippling unpopularity either. Justin Trudeau is Canada's prime minister on the strength of 32.6 percent of the votes cast in the 2021 federal election. And although the most obnoxious acts of the protesters have provoked almost universal revulsion, it's by no means clear that they will ultimately lose this trial of political strength. Voters everywhere expect governments to keep order, and if governments cannot or will not do the job, the people in charge of those governments will pay the political price. There may not be a lot of room for the truckers' popularity to rise. There's a lot of room for Trudeau's popularity to fall. This drama is unfolding on Ottawa streets, framed on television screens by the skyline of the Canadian federal Parliament. Canadians will not blame the chief of the Ottawa police force if the blockades continue. They will not blame the Ontario provincial police, or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or the provincial premiers. It's the authority of the national government that is being challenged—it is the national economy that is being disrupted—and it's the head of the national government to whom Canadians will look for a resolution. If Trudeau does not or cannot deliver that resolution, he will pay the price.

This crisis may be building to something truly dangerous. Trudeau has to act, but Canada may lack the means to act effectively and decisively enough to end the protests without harm to protesters or police. A big show of force may persuade protesters to return home quietly. A not-so-big show may tempt them to resist and see what happens. The province of Ontario will reportedly introduce emergency legislation today. That could test the issue.

If a crackdown goes bad in Canada, the negative consequences may not be confined to the country. The truck disruptions have shocked Canadians because Canada is generally an extremely law-

abiding place. To a great extent, Canada still is law-abiding: When a court ordered the truck protesters to cease blaring their horns, the horn-blaring ceased. If the practice of using trucks as rolling fortifications were to spread south of the border, however, it could mobilize American protesters, who are less law-compliant than their Canadian counterparts.

Politically motivated violence in America has been on the rise in the past half-dozen years: the riots and looting in U.S. cities after Floyd's murder; the takeover of a portion of Portland, Oregon, by left-wing militants; the attempted kidnapping of Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer by anti-vaccination extremists, all preceding the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol—and whatever comes next.

Maybe this latest form of performative intimidation is only being road tested in Ottawa. It could be coming to American cities soon.

The Canadian trucker convoy is an unpopular uprising

Vox, Zack Beauchamp, 11 February 2022

Since January 28, Canada's capital city of Ottawa has been under siege by a convoy of angry truckers — a two-week running protest that has drawn support from right-wing extremists in Canada and abroad.

The so-called "freedom convoy" is nominally protesting a vaccine mandate for truckers, implemented in mid-January on both sides of the US-Canada border. But the demonstrations have swiftly ballooned into a broader far-right movement, with some demonstrators waving Confederate and Nazi flags. Protester demands include an end to all Covid-19 restrictions in Canada and the resignation of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

The demonstrators, which have included as many as 8,000 people at their peak, have terrorized Ottawa: blockading streets, harassing citizens, forcing business closures, and honking their extremely loud horns all night. Ottawa police, who have proven some combination of unwilling and unable to restore order, have even set up a special hotline to deal with a deluge of alleged hate crimes stemming from the protests. In the first week of February, it received over 200 calls.

Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson has declared a state of emergency, and Trudeau's government has deployed hundreds of Royal Canadian Mounted Police to the protests. As the situation in Ottawa continues, the freedom convoy movement has expanded across the country. Demonstrators have shut down at least two border crossings between Canada and the United States.

But while the protests are generating a lot of noise and attention, the eruption actually points up a counterintuitive fact: The Canadian far right is weak and ineffectual, especially when it comes to pandemic restrictions.

Canada's provinces have generally employed strict Covid-19 measures such as school mask mandates and vaccine passports, including during the recent omicron surge. They have enjoyed broad public support in doing so; even the strictest restrictions are less controversial in Canada than in the US. The current demonstration is quite unpopular with the general public, divisive even inside the center-right Conservative party.

This doesn't mean the movement will accomplish nothing. It has already contributed to a revolt against the Conservative party's leader and is serving as an important organizing node for far-rightists. The border crossing blockage is putting more stress on the US-Canada supply chain, costing (by one estimation) \$300 million a day in economic damage. Internationally, the freedom convoy has inspired copycat efforts in both the United States and France.

But it's important to understand the broader context in Canada. News coverage of the convoy, especially from sympathetic anchors on Fox News, may lead Americans to believe that Canada is in the midst of a far-right popular uprising. In reality, the mainstream consensus in Canada about Covid-

19, and the nation's institutions in general, is holding. The so-called trucker movement is on the fringe, including among Canadian truckers — some 90 percent of whom are vaccinated.

They are angry because they have lost.

Canadians against “truckers”

I've been to Canada several times since the beginning of the pandemic, driving over the Peace Bridge from Buffalo into southern Ontario. The differences between the two countries become apparent almost immediately upon crossing the border. At gas stations and rest stops in upstate New York, masks are treated as optional at best; once you cross the border, virtually everyone you see indoors is masked up. When my daughter developed a fever from an ear infection, I was asked to provide a negative Covid-19 test upon entry to an urgent care facility; without one, we were told we would have been turned away.

My experiences reflect the country's much stricter government policies. Vaccine passports, school mask mandates, and even bans on private indoor gatherings larger than 10 people have been widely used across Canadian provinces. Even Alberta, the prairie heart of Canadian conservatism, had imposed all three — with Jason Kenney, the province's Conservative premier, arguing in September that a passport system was “the only way to cut viral transmission without destroying businesses.”

Alberta and several other Canadian provinces are now in the process of lifting some of the more burdensome restrictions. But this generally reflects the omicron surge's ebb rather a wave of public opposition; in Ontario, home to Ottawa and Toronto, the Conservative provincial government is following a preexisting reopening script pegged to a decline in case counts and hospitalizations. Some provincial leaders, like Quebec's François Legault, noted that reopening plans were in no way influenced by trucker shenanigans.

There is a reason Canadian politicians have taken this stance: Poll after poll finds Canadians have widely supported restrictive pandemic policies at both the federal and provincial levels. This is not to say they enjoy restrictions on their freedoms — who does? — but simply that they believe the government has an obligation to act when case counts are high.

This is especially clear when it comes to coercive vaccination rules, ostensibly the freedom convoy's main target.

The January edition of the Covid-19 Monitor, a regular survey of Canadian attitudes about the pandemic, finds that about three-quarters of Canadians support vaccine passports for indoor dining and gatherings. Strikingly, 70 percent would “strongly” or “somewhat” support a vaccine mandate for all eligible adults — a vastly more restrictive policy than any province has actually attempted. What's more, the researchers behind Covid-19 Monitor find that, on most issues, “support has remained relatively stable” throughout the pandemic — strong evidence that this isn't just a short-term blip caused by omicron.

It makes sense, then, that the trucker protest is widely unpopular.

The polling firm Innovative Research Group has conducted three separate rounds of polling since the beginning of the convoy, and found that public opposition has risen as the protest has gone on. In their most recent survey, conducted February 4-9, a scant 29 percent of Canadians expressed support for “the idea of the protest” while 53 percent disapproved.

A separate survey by Léger, released on February 8, found that 62 percent of Canadians oppose “the message that the trucker convoy protests are conveying of no vaccine mandates and less public health measures.” Sixty-five percent of respondents agreed that the demonstrators represented a “small minority of Canadians who are thinking only about themselves.”

Why the trucker protest matters, even though they're losing

It's worth emphasizing that a movement does not have to be popular with a majority to have influence.

During the trucker protests, an uprising against Conservative Party Leader Erin O'Toole succeeded in toppling him from the top spot. The challenge was fueled, in part, by Conservative members of Parliament frustrated by O'Toole's equivocal stance on the convoy, with many in the ranks calling on the party to embrace the truckers.

The leadership challenge points to the bigger effect of the protest: It is a rare action by the Canadian far right that's gaining mainstream attention and backing. "Even if the trucker protests do recede, their show of strength has won them demonstrable support abroad, including financial support, and has established large communities online that could fuel future activity," the New York Times's Max Fisher writes.

The protests have had notable international reach, becoming a cause célèbre for anti-restriction conservatives in the US and Europe. Sixty-three percent of the donations to the truckers' now-removed GoFundMe came from the United States; the American right reportedly played an important role in getting the protest off the ground. It's also now inspiring actions elsewhere: An American convoy is scheduled to depart from California on March 4, with Washington as its ultimate destination. A similar French effort is already on its way to Paris, with police vowing to bar its entry to the capital.

Yet the fact that so much of the so-called trucker movement's support seems to be coming from abroad is telling.

The reality is that a combination of factors, ranging from the structure of the Canadian political system to widespread acceptance of liberal cultural values, have made its government especially resistant to far-right radicalism. On issues ranging from Covid-19 to immigration to abortion, the mainstream consensus has held.

The freedom convoy's willingness to disrupt life in Canada's capital is less a sign of an incipient popular uprising than the lashing out of a minority that has little influence at the ballot box.

Canadian trucker protest: A day in the life

Fox Business, Kristen Altus, 11 February 2022

In the early morning hours on Friday, Ottawa's Ambassador Bridge was quiet, with not many people in sight. Instead, the low hums of semi-trucks gently rattled the streets surrounding Canada's Parliament.

The Freedom Convoy has gained strength and numbers since the movement started nearly three weeks ago by Canadian truckers protesting the country's COVID-19 vaccine mandate.

"One of the main reasons is for kids, and also for all the injustice that we've been living for the past two years," protester and contractor Danick Venne told FOX Business' Jeff Flock.

"I'm sick and tired of people trying to tell me they can vaccinate my children without my permission," a truck driver named David added. "I'm sick and tired of them canceling school when there's no reason for it."

David said the campaign is bigger than truckers' rights: "We haven't even gotten started about the carbon tax that's killing the trucking industry."

Although he's not a truck driver himself, Venne said he traveled to volunteer for the cause, providing security, food, coffee, fuel, even helping to build a tall, wooden podium so voices can be heard loud and clear.

"I come here and volunteer and give help and love to everybody," Venne, while standing in front of red and white painted signs that read "Canada loves truckers," "Freedom Heroes," and "One Love," explained.

"Every time I have spare time, I go help," he continued. "I go serve coffee if I can, or anything I will do to help."

Another group of non-truckers joined the protesters to serve hot food on Ottawa's closed roads, further attesting to the outpouring of community support.

"We had an officer donate \$600 in food," one of the men said. "Ridgetown Tim Horton's supported us with Tim cards to give the people."

While the Freedom Convoy protesters share a passionate, communal spirit, their ongoing bridge blockade is starting to create economic problems.

Ford and Stellantis, the parent company of Chrysler, say the four-day standstill on the Ambassador Bridge, which connects Detroit to the city of Windsor, Ontario, will pile more problems onto an already-strained supply chain.

The disruptions have even forced Ford to cut work shifts at some of its U.S. and Canadian factories.

"This interruption on the Detroit/Windsor bridge hurts customers, autoworkers, suppliers, communities and companies on both sides of the border that are already two years into parts shortages resulting from the global semiconductor issue, COVID and more," Ford told FOX Business in a statement Thursday.

"We hope this situation is resolved quickly because it could have widespread impact on all automakers in the U.S. and Canada," the company continued.

But the future of the Freedom Convoy remains unclear. An Ontario court Thursday froze millions of dollars in the GiveSendGo account of "Freedom Convoy 2022" on Thursday which had raked more than \$10 million in donations.

The Associated Press also reported Friday that the Biden administration has urged Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to use federal powers and end the standoff.

Freedom Convoy's lead attorney Keith Wilson called out Trudeau for characterizing the protesters as "Nazis" and a "fringe minority" Wednesday on "The Evening Edit."

"It's troubling that the prime minister of our country is now characterizing hardworking Canadians, who during COVID, delivered food and critical supplies, and put themselves at risk to whatever risk imposed," Wilson said. "And now, suddenly, for political opportunism, he's characterizing these hardworking truckers who are trying to protect their charter rights."

The Canadian protesters aren't just truckers. Here's who has been showing up and what they want

CNN, Paula Newton, 11 February 2022

A massive protest by Canadian truckers and others against Covid-19 mandates has been growing for weeks, crippling three US border crossings and downtown Ottawa -- with no end in sight.

So, why are the demonstrations happening now? What exactly are they about? And what's being done to address them? Here are some key questions and answers about Canada's Covid-19 protests. What are truckers protesting in Canada?

Thousands of truckers are participating in the so-called "Freedom Convoy," fighting a vaccine mandate that is forcing all Canadian truckers crossing the US-Canadian border to be fully vaccinated or face quarantine in their homes for two weeks when they return.

The rule went into effect in mid-January in Canada and January 22 in the United States. The US Department of Homeland Security now requires noncitizens entering the United States via border crossings or ferry terminals along the US northern and southern borders be fully vaccinated against Covid-19.

Before this mandate, truckers were exempted from the vaccine requirement and permitted to cross the border, at times testing for Covid-19, even during the 18-month period that the border was closed to nonessential traffic. Truckers were considered vital to keeping supply chains functioning normally.

Nearly 90% of Canada's truckers are fully vaccinated and eligible to cross the border, according to the Canadian government. So, the protesting truckers represent a "small, fringe minority," Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said, adding early on that his government did not expect the vaccine mandate to significantly affect supply chains.

How have the protests evolved?

The Freedom Convoy of truckers began its protest in January in Canada's western provinces, with the goal of reaching the nation's capital, Ottawa, and continuing to protest until the vaccine mandate was lifted.

On its cross-country journey, the protest has attracted support from thousands more Canadians, even some who are fully vaccinated, who say they want all Covid-19 preventative measures dropped, including mask mandates, lockdowns and restrictions on gatherings.

A large, noisy convoy, including hundreds of trucks and other vehicles, descended January 29 on Ottawa. Since then, they have snarled traffic and honked often and loudly. Protesters in more than 60 vehicles also disrupted traffic at Ottawa International Airport on Thursday, circling the arrivals and departure terminals, airport officials said.

In several other large Canadian cities and towns, protest crowds emerged over the first weekend of February with hundreds of trucks and thousands of protesters. Rallies also took place in Toronto, Quebec City, Vancouver and Winnipeg.

Meantime, Friday marked the fifth day protesters impeded access to the Ambassador Bridge, which connects Detroit and Windsor, Ontario -- the busiest international crossing in North America.

In addition, a mix of semi-trailers and farm equipment shut down the border crossing connecting Emerson, Manitoba, and Pembina, North Dakota, according to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Manitoba. The Coutts access point between Alberta and Montana has also been blocked.

Similar protests soon could erupt in the United States, including around Sunday's Super Bowl in Southern California, American officials warn. Right-wing media outlets have raised the prospect of like-minded rallies in the US and offered positive coverage of those in Canada.

What do the protesters want?

Protesters will remain in Ottawa "for as long as it takes for governments across Canada to end all mandates" associated with Covid-19, Freedom Convoy organizers said last week in a statement.

Some want Trudeau to speak with them and hear their opposition to the mandates and restrictions, those protesters told CNN. Trudeau has no intention of meeting with protesters, who hold views "unacceptable" to most Canadians, he has said.

What has the impact been on Canadians?

The blockades have slowed the movement of goods and caused production problems at car manufacturing plants along the border. Ford, General Motors and Stellantis have all announced auto production issues in Canada.

The Ambassador Bridge "is too essential to both of our national economies, and ... puts a lot of bread on the table for our families on both sides of the border," Windsor, Ontario, Mayor Drew Dilkens told CNN this week.

In Ottawa, residents and service providers in the downtown core feel like hostages in a city under siege, they've told CNN. Most businesses in the area have been forced to close; they include a large mall next to the protest site.

Dozens of trucks remain in Ottawa's downtown core in what local officials have described as an "occupation." The police chief calls it "unlawful," as property damage, thefts and mischief have been reported, along with hundreds of alleged hate crimes. Some 1,000 calls related to the demonstration have been received, plus 25 arrests made and more than 1,500 traffic and other tickets issued, police said Thursday.

A judge this week signed a temporary injunction that prevents protesters in Ottawa from using horns during their demonstrations, court documents show.

Dilkens is expected in court Friday to seek an injunction that would expand police's authority to respond to the protesters, he said Thursday. If the protesters are "unwilling to move on," the mayor said, tow trucks and equipment would be brought in to help "move the vehicles out of the way" to reopen the border crossing.

What has PM Justin Trudeau said about all this?

Trudeau, who is fully vaccinated and boosted, has said the protesters do not represent the vast majority of Canadians, about 80% of whom have opted to get fully vaccinated. Most believe public health restrictions save lives, the Prime Minister has said.

He implored protesters parked in trucks right outside the parliament building Monday to end their demonstration.

"Individuals are trying to blockade our economy, our democracy and our fellow citizens' daily lives. It has to stop," Trudeau said during an emergency debate in Ottawa that marked his first public appearance since isolating after he and some members of his family contracted the coronavirus.

The Prime Minister acknowledged that protesters have a right to voice their concerns but said residents don't deserve to be harassed in their own neighborhoods.

"This pandemic has sucked for all Canadians, but Canadians know the way to get through it is continuing to listen to science, continuing to lean on each other, continuing to be there for each other," Trudeau said after underscoring that Canadians are tired of Covid-19 health restrictions.

By Thursday, the Prime Minister was employing stronger language in a series of tweets: "The illegal blockades and occupations happening across the country ... (are) harming the communities they're taking place in -- and they're hurting jobs, businesses, and our country's economy."

Trudeau had spoken with Windsor's mayor "about the illegal blockade of the Ambassador Bridge ... because it is causing real harm to workers and economies on both sides of the border," he tweeted.

He'd also spoken with opposition party leaders, asking all lawmakers to "denounce these illegal acts -- and to call for an end to these blockades."

About 80% of Canadians are vaccinated. Why so much angst now?

Almost 4 of every 5 Canadians are vaccinated, according to the Canadian government. However, provincial governments and the federal government have enforced various vaccine mandates, stoking ire among those politically opposed and fatigue among others as the pandemic hits its two-year mark.

At the federal and provincial level, Canada has enforced some of the strictest Covid-19 measures in the world, with widespread mask mandates and restrictions on the size of gatherings, not only at large events and restaurants but also in private homes.

A vocal minority of Canadians says they agree with the truckers' protest, saying it is time to drop most Covid-19 restrictions. With so many Canadians complying for so long with vaccine and mask mandates and other Covid-19 measures, some say public health officials and government leaders are now going too far.

As one couple who said they are fully vaccinated feel they did their part and now they want to move on, they told CNN.

Had Canadians staged serious protests over Covid-19 rules before this?

Various smaller protests took place across the country against health measures and mandates in 2020 and 2021. However, this is the largest and most widespread protest of its kind to date during the pandemic.

What Covid-19 rules are in place for Canadians who are not truckers?

Several provinces are beginning to drop some mitigation measures and allow the reopening of restaurant dining rooms, theaters, cinemas and gyms, albeit with capacity restrictions.

Decisions about most of these health restrictions and how and when to ease them are determined not by the Trudeau government but by individual provinces.

There is still a federal vaccine mandate for passengers traveling by air domestically or internationally. In addition, all federal public servants are required to be fully vaccinated as a condition of employment.

How might the Covid-19 protests end?

Possible solutions include persuading protesters to disburse voluntarily; the government giving into demands; and police removing the protesters. Military force is considered highly unlikely as Canada's armed forces are not a police force and they "are not involved in law enforcement in this situation," Defense Minister Anita Anand told CNN.

The Trudeau government will send more officers to protests across the country, saying Thursday the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Canada's national police force, continues to show decisive action.

"The RCMP are going to be sending additional reinforcements to Ottawa. I also can advise that the RCMP will be sending reinforcements to Windsor and in addition to that the RCMP have added additional resources at Coutts, in Alberta," said Marco Mendicino, Canada's public safety minister.

"Our top priority is to make sure that these illegal blockades end," he said.

From: Lambo, Pam -WSHDC -WS -PA
Sent: February 11, 2022 11:19 AM
To: Loken, Martin -WSHDC -GR <Martin.Loken@international.gc.ca>; McIntyre, Graeme -WSHDC -GR <Graeme.McIntyre@international.gc.ca>; Holmes, Michael -WSHDC -GR <Michael.Holmes@international.gc.ca>; Maisonneuve, Mélanie -WSHDC -BF <Melanie.Maisonneuve@international.gc.ca>; Kiameh, Madeleine -WSHDC -BF <Madeleine.Kiameh@international.gc.ca>; Fanning, Tammy -WSHDC -BF <Tammy.Fanning@international.gc.ca>; Stendardo, Frank -WSHDC -TD <Frank.Stendardo@international.gc.ca>; 'Arseneau, Michel' <michel.arseneau@rcmp-grc.gc.ca>; 'McGraw, Mathews' <mathews.mcgraw@rcmp-grc.gc.ca>; Gordon, Sean -WSHDC -PL <Sean.Gordon@international.gc.ca>
Cc: Baird, Katherine -WSHDC -DHOM/CDMA <Katherine.Baird@international.gc.ca>; Grant, Heather -WSHDC -WS <Heather.Grant@international.gc.ca>; Bélanger, Jérôme -WSHDC -GR <Jerome.Belanger@international.gc.ca>; *WSHDC-Media Relations <D-WSHDC-MediaRelations@international.gc.ca>; Parsons, Alanna -NGB <Alanna.Parsons@international.gc.ca>; Barratt, Adam -WSHDC -WS <Adam.Barratt@international.gc.ca>; Boudreau, Wendy -WSHDC -WS <Wendy.Boudreau@international.gc.ca>; Maron, Stefano -WSHDC -WS <Stefano.Maron@international.gc.ca>; Fisher, Dani -MNPLS -GR <dani.fisher@international.gc.ca>; Connell, Christine -DTROT -GR <Christine.Connell@international.gc.ca>; Denter, Christian -NGB <Christian.Denter@international.gc.ca>
Subject: 2022-02-11: U.S. media roll-up: "Freedom Convoy" Protest

See full media articles below (and attached).

Also attached: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau convenes the Incident Response Group, Twitter Snapshot and congressional reaction

A number of national security experts are featured in reporting by National Public Radio noting that authorities are increasingly wary of the extremist views on display and "some of the most well-known radicals in this country have now descended upon the capital". NPR's Emma Jacobs went to Ottawa to interview demonstrators – one of whom said "it's a civil war between the government and its people". Canadian Stephanie Carvin, a national security expert, reports that authorities don't want to take responsibility for the protests – "there's a reluctance to even just hand out parking tickets. It is a baffling kind of collapse in authority". Latest updates from DHS to media are that the US trucker protest could begin "as early as this weekend" in Southern California and "spread" to Washington around the President's State of the Union Address on March 1. There is also reporting by CNN that indicates the Ottawa International Airport put out a statement about "60 to 70 vehicles" attempting to disrupt traffic by "circling the arrivals and departure terminals".

NBC News reports how the trucker protests are hurting auto plants across North America, noting that the truck blockade at the Ambassador Bridge is hurting plants as far away as Kentucky and redirecting truck traffic isn't enough. The CEO of the non-profit Center for Automotive Research notes the "mess" and the "strangled" plants in Canada. Noting the impact on production, the President of the American Automotive Policy Council expressed "appreciation" for the U.S. government trying to facilitate commerce but said Canadian officials need to address the "upheaval" and get bridges and transit routes back open". CNN headlines suggest the blockades are spreading – *Access to three US-Canada border crossings cut off by trucker protest blockades* – Michigan, North Dakota and Montana. The Detroit Free Press is reporting that General Motors is "chartering cargo planes to fly parts stuck at the border over the Detroit River and into the U.S. to keep a critical truck plant going in Indiana".

There's also reporting by the Associated Press about the growing number of conservative U.S. media figures who are "lining up" in support of Canadian truckers – and it's not just FOX News. Ben Shapiro – "Nobody wants giant bridges shut down. Obstructing traffic is bad no matter what you are protesting for. However, the cause of this protest happens to be righteous". Tucker Carlson adds, "The trucker convoy in Canada is pretty cool. People getting together to promote human rights. Who's against that?" Lara Trump offered her support as well, "right here in America, people are cheering them on, because this is about freedom".

Media also reporting extensively on White House comment that Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg urged their Canadian counterparts to "use federal powers to resolve this situation" and offered the support of their departments. This dialogue is also referenced in the attached statement from the Prime Minister.

Abbreviated Articles

US urges Canada to use federal powers to end bridge blockade

Associated Press, Rob Gillies and Tom Krisher, 11 February 2022

The Biden administration urged Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government Thursday to use its federal powers to end the truck blockade by Canadians protesting the country's COVID-19 restrictions, as the bumper-to-bumper demonstration forced auto plants on both sides of the border to shut down or scale back production.

U.S., Canada scramble for levers to end the Ambassador Bridge blockade

Politico, Tanya Snyder, 10 February 2022

Governments on both sides of the Canadian border are mobilizing to figure out how to end the bridge blockade that has snarled travel and freight movement between Detroit and Windsor, Ontario.

G.M. cancels shifts at a Michigan plant as protests spread disruption.

New York Times, Ana Swanson and Jack Ewing, 10 February 2022

General Motors is the latest automaker to suspend production because of protests at a crucial Canadian border crossing that have disrupted supply chains already in turmoil because of the pandemic.

Canadian trucker protests start to hurt auto plants nationwide

NBC News, Paul A. Eisenstein, 11 February 2022

Like falling dominoes, automakers across North America are adding to the list of plants affected by the truck blockade that has all but halted traffic across two of the busiest routes linking the U.S. and Canada.

The Ottawa trucker protest is rooted in extremism, a national security expert says

NPR, Nell Clark, 10 February 2022

Massive protests by truckers opposing pandemic precautions continue to ensnare traffic in Canada. Authorities are increasingly wary of the extremist views on display during the demonstrations, which some have dubbed the "Freedom Convoy."

Full Articles

US urges Canada to use federal powers to end bridge blockade

Associated Press, Rob Gillies and Tom Krisher, 11 February 2022

The Biden administration urged Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government Thursday to use its federal powers to end the truck blockade by Canadians protesting the country's COVID-19 restrictions, as the bumper-to-bumper demonstration forced auto plants on both sides of the border to shut down or scale back production.

For the fourth straight day, scores of truckers taking part in what they dubbed the Freedom Convoy blocked the Ambassador Bridge connecting Windsor, Ontario, to Detroit, disrupting the flow of auto parts and other products between the two countries.

The White House said Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg spoke with their Canadian counterparts and urged them to help resolve the standoff.

Federal Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino said Royal Canadian Mounted Police reinforcements are being sent to Windsor, Ottawa and Coutts, Alberta where another border blockade is happening.

Trudeau met virtually with leaders of Canada's opposition late Thursday and said he spoke with Windsor's mayor. Trudeau's office said there is a willingness to "respond with whatever it takes" to end the blockades.

Conservative Ontario Premier Doug Ford, meanwhile, moved to cut off funding for the protests by successfully asking a court to freeze millions of dollars in donations to the convoy through crowd-funding site GiveSendGo. Ford has called the protests an occupation.

Canadian officials previously got GoFundMe to cut off funding after protest organizers used the site to raise about 10 million Canadian dollars (\$7.8 million). GoFundMe determined that the fundraising effort violated the site's terms of service due to unlawful activity.

With political and economic pressure mounting, Windsor Mayor Drew Dilkens announced the city will seek a court injunction to end the occupation.

"The economic harm is not sustainable and it must come to an end," he said.

In the U.S., authorities braced for the possibility of similar truck-borne protests inspired by the Canadians, and authorities in Paris and Belgium banned road blockades to head off disruptions there, too.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security said in a bulletin to local and state law enforcement agencies that it has received reports that truckers are planning to "potentially block roads in major metropolitan cities" in a protest against vaccine mandates and other issues.

The agency said the convoy could begin in Southern California as early as this weekend, possibly disrupting traffic around the Super Bowl, and reach Washington in March in time for the State of the Union address, according to a copy of Tuesday's bulletin obtained by The Associated Press.

The White House said the department is "surging additional staff" to the Super Bowl just in case.

The ban on road blockades in Europe and the threat of prison and heavy fines were likewise prompted by online chatter from groups calling on drivers to converge on Paris and Brussels over the next few days.

The Ambassador Bridge is the busiest U.S.-Canadian border crossing, carrying 25% of all trade between the two countries, and the effects of the blockade there were felt rapidly.

Ford said its Windsor engine plant reopened Thursday after being shut down on Wednesday because of a lack of parts. But the factory and the company's assembly plant in Oakville, Ontario, near Toronto, were operating at reduced capacity, the automaker said.

On the U.S. side, GM sent the first shift home two hours early Thursday at its Flint, Michigan, heavy-duty pickup truck plant due to parts shortages.

Stellantis cut short the first shift Thursday at its Jeep plant in Toledo, Ohio, because of parts shortages. The plant was running normally on Friday.

Also, Honda planned to stop production on one assembly line during the day shift Friday at its plant in Alliston, Ontario.

Toyota said three of its plants in Ontario closed for the rest of the week because of parts shortages, and production also had to be curtailed in Georgetown, Kentucky.

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer urged Canadian authorities to quickly resolve the standoff, saying: "It's hitting paychecks and production lines. That is unacceptable."

Hundreds of demonstrators in trucks have also paralyzed the streets of downtown Ottawa for almost two weeks now, and have now closed three border crossings: at Windsor; at Coutts, Alberta, opposite Montana; and at Emerson, Manitoba, across from North Dakota.

The protesters are decrying vaccine mandates for truckers and other COVID-19 restrictions and are railing against Trudeau, even though many of Canada's precautions, such as mask rules and vaccine passports for getting into restaurants, theaters and other places, were enacted by provincial authorities, not the federal government, and are already rapidly being lifted as the omicron surge levels off.

Trudeau continued to stand firm against lifting vaccine mandates, including a requirement that all truck drivers entering the country be fully vaccinated. But because an estimated 90% of the nation's truckers are already inoculated, some conservatives have called on the prime minister to drop the mandate.

The convoy has been promoted and cheered on by many Fox News personalities and attracted support from the likes of former President Donald Trump and Texas Sen. Ted Cruz.

The Associated Press identified more than a dozen Facebook groups encompassing roughly a half-million members that are being used to drum up support for the Canadian protests or plan similar ones in the U.S. and Europe.

To get around the blockade and into Canada, truckers in the Detroit area have had to drive 70 miles north to Port Huron, Michigan, and cross the Blue Water Bridge, where there was a two-hour delay leaving the U.S.

The blockade is happening at a bad time for the U.S. auto industry. Supplies of new vehicles already are low across the nation because of the global shortage of computer chips, which has forced automakers to temporarily close factories.

"The disruptions we are seeing at the U.S.-Canada border — at the Detroit-Windsor Ambassador Bridge and at other crossings — are adding to the significant supply chain strains on manufacturers and other businesses in the United States," the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, National Association of Manufacturers and Business Roundtable said in a joint statement.

"We respectfully urge the Canadian government to act swiftly to address the disruption to the flow of trade and its impact on manufacturers and other businesses on both sides of the border."

G.M. cancels shifts at a Michigan plant as protests spread disruption.

New York Times, Ana Swanson and Jack Ewing, 10 February 2022

General Motors is the latest automaker to suspend production because of protests at a crucial Canadian border crossing that have disrupted supply chains already in turmoil because of the pandemic.

G.M. said it had canceled two shifts on Wednesday and Thursday at a factory in Lansing, Mich., that makes sport utility vehicles. The plant depends on components that normally travel across a bridge between Windsor, Ontario, and Detroit that was closed by truck drivers and far-right groups angry about vaccine mandates and demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Ford Motor and Toyota have also shut down some operations because factories could not get parts manufactured in Canada.

The shutdown at the border will prevent manufacturing at Toyota's three Canadian plants for the rest of this week, Scott Vazin, a spokesman for Toyota Motor North America, said Thursday.

As long as the shutdowns are short lived, the impact on automaker sales and worker livelihoods should be limited. Companies are likely to make up for any lost production by running extra shifts or other measures.

"A couple of days shouldn't be that significant," Mr. Vazin said. "We're certainly hoping the blockade ends."

Said Deep, a spokesman at Ford, said Thursday morning that the company was running its plants in Oakville and Windsor, both in Ontario, at reduced capacity.

"This interruption on the Detroit-Windsor bridge hurts customers, autoworkers, suppliers, communities and companies on both sides of the border that are already two years into parts shortages resulting from the global semiconductor issue, Covid and more," Mr. Deep said. "We hope this situation is resolved quickly because it could have widespread impact on all automakers in the U.S. and Canada."

John Bordignon, a spokesman for Honda Canada, said on Thursday that the company's plant in Alliston, Ontario, would suspend one production line during the day shift on Friday.

"As this remains a fluid situation, we are monitoring the disruption of transportation between Canada and the U.S. and will adjust production as necessary," Mr. Bordignon said.

Protesters challenging Canada's vaccine requirements and other pandemic restrictions began cutting off traffic Monday on the Ambassador Bridge, the vital span that connects Detroit and Windsor.

The bridge accounts for roughly a quarter of the trade between the United States and Canada. Trucks carry an estimated \$300 million worth of goods across the bridge each day, about a third of which are related to the automobile industry.

Companies have begun rerouting shipments to alternative crossing routes, like the Blue Water Bridge, which links Port Huron, Mich., and Sarnia, Ontario. But a new blockade on Wednesday on a route to that bridge, as well as a surge of diverted cars and trucks, slowed traffic there.

The closings are likely to lead to losses for other industries, as well. On Wednesday, Jen Psaki, the White House press secretary, said that the Biden administration was tracking potential disruptions to agricultural exports to Canada.

Gretchen Whitmer, the governor of Michigan, said in a statement on Thursday that the blockade was putting the state's economy at risk.

"The blockade is having a significant impact on Michigan's working families who are just trying to do their jobs," she said. "Our communities and automotive, manufacturing, and agriculture businesses are feeling the effects."

Carmakers worldwide have struggled with shortages of semiconductors and other parts that severely curtailed production and sales. They had hoped that the flow of components and materials would start to return to normal this year.

Ford said last Friday that it would be forced to shut down some production lines and reduce work hours at plants across North America this week because of chip shortages.

Most carmakers operate on a “just-in-time” system that dispatches parts and materials to their factories as they are needed. The system has helped manufacturers reduce costs.

But it has also left companies vulnerable as the pandemic closed foreign ports and factories and overloaded shipping companies, warehouses and truckers.

David C. Adams, the president at Global Automakers of Canada, which represents Toyota and Honda, said auto facilities typically had about two days of inventory on hand. “Then things start to become problematic in terms of having enough parts to keep the lines running.”

U.S., Canada scramble for levers to end the Ambassador Bridge blockade

Politico, Tanya Snyder, 10 February 2022

Governments on both sides of the Canadian border are mobilizing to figure out how to end the bridge blockade that has snarled travel and freight movement between Detroit and Windsor, Ontario.

From the White House to the mayor of Windsor, public officials are working the courts, activating law enforcement, searching for alternate routes for travelers and truckers and girding for possible confrontations as they seek to bring an end to demonstrations that started two weeks ago. Though the protests started with truck drivers angry about Covid vaccine mandates, they have since morphed into a parade of grievances about government mandates.

The White House on Thursday detailed its strategy, including DOT, DHS, the National Security Council and the National Economic Council working with each other and their Canadian counterparts “to rapidly develop a set of options that match current industry demands — including alternative routes and other scenario planning.”

In addition, two members of President Joe Biden’s Cabinet on Thursday contacted their Canadian counterparts to encourage them to bring their powers to bear to end the blockade of the Ambassador Bridge, a vital lifeline for commerce between the two countries.

DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg reached out “urging them to use federal powers to resolve this situation at our joint border and offering the full support of our Homeland Security and Transportation departments,” the White House said.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau also blasted the blockade as “unacceptable” during an appearance Thursday in Ottawa. “They are impacting on regular Canadians — whether it’s grocery store prices, whether it’s jobs lost and suspended, whether it’s supply chains disrupted,” Trudeau said. “This is hurting communities across the country.”

The Biden administration said it is also “in close touch” with U.S. auto companies, shippers, business and agricultural groups and labor unions.

The administration also sought to quell anxieties about a similar convoy potentially heading to Washington, D.C., in the coming weeks, saying DHS is “aware of these reports and is taking all necessary steps” to ensure that any such protest would not interfere with trade, transportation, government and law enforcement functions.

“At this time, we have no indication that individuals involved are engaged in anything other than First Amendment-protected activity,” the administration said.

Windsor Mayor Drew Dilkens indicated an all-hands approach against the blockade on the Canadian side too Thursday, noting that the city had asked for provincial and federal police support and that provincial police “responded immediately” and were on the ground with “more coming.”

The city of Windsor is seeking a court injunction, which Dilkens said he expects will come before a judge on Thursday, to remove demonstrators blocking access to the bridge. Dilkens said the city would “make sure we have the right number of people here to be able to enforce the injunction.”

He said the fact that the convoy is “very much a leaderless movement” complicates attempts to negotiate because “there are multiple parties who believe that they represent the group when in fact, no one really represents this group.”

“The police will always try and negotiate a solution here,” Dilkens said, but he warned, “If we can’t gain compliance voluntarily, then other measures will have to be taken.”

“Everyone wants to know, ‘When are you going to move in,’” he said. “And we hope not to have to move in. We hope we can get the protesters to see the light of day and recognize that the easiest way out of this is for them to voluntarily get in their cars and drive away.”

While the road leading to the Ambassador Bridge is a municipal road, Dilkens justified the use of federal and provincial law enforcement by stressing that it was hardly “a run-of-the-mill municipal road.”

He also said Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer has “offered to send over heavy equipment to help remove vehicles, to provide security” and “whatever is required” to end the blockade.

Earlier Thursday, Whitmer issued a statement calling on Canadian authorities at all levels to “de-escalate this economic blockade.”

The Ambassador Bridge between Windsor and Detroit is still closed and Customs and Border Protection is re-routing traffic to Port Huron, an hour north, where all nine commercial lanes, including a FAST lane, are open, the White House said. The Detroit-Windsor tunnel is also open to passenger vehicle traffic.

Canadian trucker protests start to hurt auto plants nationwide

NBC News, Paul A. Eisenstein, 11 February 2022

Like falling dominoes, automakers across North America are adding to the list of plants affected by the truck blockade that has all but halted traffic across two of the busiest routes linking the U.S. and Canada.

After temporarily halting production at three of its factories in Ontario, Toyota announced Thursday that a shortage of Canadian-made parts had hit an assembly plant in Kentucky. Ford and General Motors have felt the impact at some of their operations. And though the automaker Stellantis has resumed operations at an assembly plant in Windsor, Mike Koval, the CEO of its Ram brand, said in an interview that “the situation is fluid” and could lead to new production cuts.

“It is a mess,” said Carla Bailo, the CEO of the Center for Automotive Research, or CAR, a nonprofit research group. “What we’re seeing is that the plants in Canada are really getting strangled first. Then the plants in the U.S. relying on engines and transmissions will be hurt next.”

Ongoing problems

Claiming to be mobilized by frustration with Canadian mask and vaccine mandates, thousands of truckers descended on the capital, Ottawa, last month and staged a protest that has all but paralyzed the city. Early this week, they expanded their demonstrations, first moving to blockade the Ambassador Bridge connecting Windsor, Ontario, with Detroit.

The bridge is the busiest land crossing between the U.S. and Canada and handles nearly 25 percent of the trade between the two countries. It is the primary route for auto parts and completed vehicles, especially those produced in the Ontario and Michigan manufacturing centers.

Canadian authorities responded by redirecting traffic to two other regional border crossings. The tunnel between Windsor and Detroit can only handle light vehicles, however. So trucks were diverted to the Blue Water Bridge linking Sarnia, on the Canadian side, with Port Huron, Michigan. But protestors quickly moved to tie up that link on the Canadian side, as well.

While some traffic has been able to move across the spans, traffic has been operating in one direction and at a crawl, trucks taking more than four hours to move from Sarnia to Port Huron. And what little traffic that has been able to cross the two bridges has been going from the Canadian to the U.S. side.

Among the plants so far hit by the blockade, the impact has been most severe on the Canadian side:

- Stellantis — formed by the merger of Fiat Chrysler and PSA Group last year — briefly shut down the Chrysler Pacifica minivan plant in Windsor. But it has now been brought back up.
- Ford soon followed, paring back production at a key SUV assembly line in Oakville, Ontario, and an engine plant in Windsor.
- Toyota followed by closing three Ontario plants “for the remainder of this week and then it is TBD,” chief spokesman Scott Vazin said in an interview. Those plants in Cambridge and Woodstock, Ontario, produce the conventional and hybrid versions of the RAV4 SUV, the best-selling Toyota model line, as well as the top Lexus product, the RX SUV.

Spreading chaos

On Thursday, Toyota said in a statement that its assembly plant in Kentucky had “recently been impacted by issues related to the Ambassador Bridge blockade. We expect disruptions through the weekend, and we’ll continue to make adjustments as needed.”

Shortages have already forced production cuts at the General Motors plant in Lansing, Michigan. And there is growing concern that the slowdown in production at the Ford engine plant in Windsor might soon be felt in Kentucky and Ohio. Plants in those states assemble the high-profit Ford SuperDuty pickups, which use the engines produced in Windsor.

“There is no question it is having a negative impact and it will only get worse the longer it lasts,” said Matt Blunt, president of the American Automotive Policy Council and a former governor of Missouri. The blockade is “affecting production ... clearly a situation that needs to be resolved. We appreciate the fact that the U.S. government is doing all it can to facilitate as much commerce as possible, but we need Canadian officials to address upheaval and get bridges and transit routes back open.”

Separately, White House spokesperson Jennifer Psaki said that President Joe Biden “is focused on this and we are working very closely” with the U.S. Homeland Security Department and the Canadian government to find ways to end the blockade or work around it.

Pandemic problems

All told, the two bridges linking Michigan and Ontario carry about \$100 billion in automotive goods annually.

So a disruption in traffic is a problem at any time. But it’s particularly worrisome now, having had to cope for two years with Covid-fueled production cuts and the slowdowns caused by an ongoing shortage of semiconductors.

Auto buyers, as well as automakers, have felt the heat. There currently are only about 1 million vehicles in U.S. dealer lots, reported J.D. Power, down from the more than 3 million considered normal for this time of year. So, not only are shoppers finding it hard to locate the new vehicles they want, but they are facing a surge in new vehicle prices. According to J.D. Power and other tracking services, the average transaction price for a new vehicle jumped to as much as \$47,000 at the end of 2021, up more than \$10,000 since the beginning of the pandemic.

There are only a handful of vehicles at Suburban Ford of Ferndale, a suburb at the northern border of Detroit, said sales manager Brycen Collins. And he now is worried that his inventory could shrink further due to the blockade.

"Everything I heard is that we have a couple more days before it starts hurting us," Collins said. Ironically, the speed at which the blockade crisis has hit is, in part, the industry's own fault. Over the last few decades, automakers have moved to a "lean" manufacturing system called just-in-time production. They maintain minimal levels of inventory and, when possible, take delivery of parts and components shortly before they're needed on the assembly line. That leaves little room for error.

"We saw this during the pandemic as well," said Bailo, when manpower shortages at parts plants forced some assembly plants to trim or halt production. "There are going to be changes" going forward, she added. In some cases, manufacturers may need to start building warehouse inventories again. And they will be more likely to seek out dual sources of parts. If one supplier goes down, they'll turn to the other to fill the gap.

The Ottawa trucker protest is rooted in extremism, a national security expert says

NPR, Nell Clark, 10 February 2022

Massive protests by truckers opposing pandemic precautions continue to ensnare traffic in Canada. Authorities are increasingly wary of the extremist views on display during the demonstrations, which some have dubbed the "Freedom Convoy."

The drivers have been blocking major metropolitan areas in Ottawa, Ontario, for over a week and are becoming increasingly raucous, calling for the lifting of health regulations as well as a regime change in the country. Protestors in tractor-trailers and other vehicles have been running their engines and honking their horns day and night in the densely populated area. There are also hundreds of protestors on foot.

Ottawa City Councilor Matthew Luloff told Morning Edition that hate symbols and acutely anti-Semitic writing have been seen at the rallies. Along with Canadian flags, some protestors have also been showing off U.S. Confederate flags and swastikas.

"Some of the most well-known radicals in this country have now descended upon the capital. Some of them are calling for violence. Some of them are threatening individual politicians," said Luloff.

Some of the protestors have legitimate concerns, noted Luloff. But what's driving those using the protests to push hate?

In fact, extremist groups are at the core of the movement, Stephanie Carvin, a national security expert, tells Morning Edition. Carvin reports groups with conspiratorial beliefs, anti-government and bigoted views have been trying for years to organize a convoy, but vaccine mandates helped to finally give their plan enough momentum in Ottawa.

"In reality, I think what we're looking at is something like a spark that lit a powder keg within the wider Canadian population," Carvin says.

Carvin notes fatigue for mitigation measures is at an all-time high as many places in Canada come out of a fourth round of major lockdowns for COVID-19 prevention, unlike many other countries — including the U.S. — which have not had consistent lockdowns.

Those fatigued with lockdown-induced economic and social struggles resonate with the trucker protest's messages against COVID-19 mandates, even though at its core, the movement's roots are firmly based in violent extremist ideologies, Carvin explains.

When NPR's Emma Jacobs visited the protests in Ottawa and interviewed demonstrators, a man who's part of the self-appointed security for the protests' areas pushed his way into the interview.

"It's a civil war between the government and its people," he explained. He didn't give his name.

From a security perspective, Carvin reports authorities don't want to take responsibility for the protests. Law enforcement has been confiscating protesters' fuel and calling for additional police forces.

"There's a reluctance to even just hand out parking tickets. It is a baffling kind of collapse of authority," says Carvin.

Even as Canada lifts coronavirus mandates in some areas, the protests may not end due to their anti-governmental nature.

If the protests spread across the United States, authorities worry they could further crumble supply chains and potentially disrupt the upcoming Super Bowl and State of the Union address.

From: Lambo, Pam -WSHDC -WS -PA
Sent: February 10, 2022 2:45 PM
To: Loken, Martin -WSHDC -GR <Martin.Loken@international.gc.ca>; McIntyre, Graeme -WSHDC -GR <Graeme.McIntyre@international.gc.ca>; Holmes, Michael -WSHDC -GR <Michael.Holmes@international.gc.ca>; Maisonneuve, Mélanie -WSHDC -BF <Melanie.Maisonneuve@international.gc.ca>; Kiameh, Madeleine -WSHDC -BF <Madeleine.Kiameh@international.gc.ca>; Fanning, Tammy -WSHDC -BF <Tammy.Fanning@international.gc.ca>; Stendardo, Frank -WSHDC -TD <Frank.Stendardo@international.gc.ca>; 'Arseneau, Michel' <michel.arseneau@rcmp-grc.gc.ca>; 'McGraw, Mathews' <mathews.mcgraw@rcmp-grc.gc.ca>; Gordon, Sean -WSHDC -PL <Sean.Gordon@international.gc.ca>
Cc: Baird, Katherine -WSHDC -DHOM/CDMA <Katherine.Baird@international.gc.ca>; Grant, Heather -WSHDC -WS <Heather.Grant@international.gc.ca>; Bélanger, Jérôme -WSHDC -GR <Jerome.Belanger@international.gc.ca>; *WSHDC-Media Relations <D-WSHDC-MediaRelations@international.gc.ca>; Parsons, Alanna -NGB <Alanna.Parsons@international.gc.ca>; Barratt, Adam -WSHDC -WS <Adam.Barratt@international.gc.ca>; Boudreau, Wendy -WSHDC -WS <Wendy.Boudreau@international.gc.ca>; Maron, Stefano -WSHDC -WS <Stefano.Maron@international.gc.ca>; Fisher, Dani -MNPLS -GR <dani.fisher@international.gc.ca>; Connell, Christine -DTROT -GR <Christine.Connell@international.gc.ca>; Denter, Christian -NGB <Christian.Denter@international.gc.ca>
Subject: 2022-02-10: U.S. media roll-up: "Freedom Convoy" Protest

See full media articles below (and attached).

Also attached: Twitter snapshot (including members of Congress) and Transcript of CTV's Evan Solomon interview with former U.S. Ambassador Bruce Heyman and others

Media calls received: 5 (4 US, 1 Canadian). Consulting with HQ.

Media summary: The truckers protest is now receiving extensive coverage in mainstream US media, both national and regional. You would be hard pressed to find a US news outlet (print or television) not reporting on the protest in Canada. Even commentators on FOX News have polarizing views – Geraldo Rivera called the truckers “selfish” and their behavior “thuggish” while other talking heads on FOX applauded the truckers, calling them the “blue collar” essential workers standing up for their freedoms. Faith based outlets including the Christian Broadcasting Network are interviewing truckers in Ottawa with talk of “God-given rights” at this “peaceful” protest – and how plans are taking shape among US truckers to convoy from California to Washington, DC. Beyond the debate over vaccine mandates and civil liberties, coverage also highlights disruptions to supply chains and broader economic impacts citing statements by the increasing number of binational industry and US government (State and Federal) voices.

Entering its third week, the protesters’ confidence is gaining and local television crews are there to capture its impacts. With blockades at Michigan’s Ambassador Bridge and at the Port of Entry in Pembina, North Dakota, regional media are connecting the dots on how local businesses that rely on supply chains are having to lay off workers. A significant number of outlets have picked up on comments by US law enforcement officials that copycat protests encouraged by the truckers’ “success” in Canada could disrupt this weekend’s Super Bowl. Niche trucker publications are reporting out of places like Little Rock, Arkansas talking about “Convoy to DC 2022” with a growing Facebook following from groups who “believe in our founding fathers”.

Companies who depend on the border are contacting their Governors and members of Congress – and taking to twitter and issuing news releases. The Governor of Michigan issued a statement: *Governor Whitmer Calls on Canada to Reopen Traffic on Ambassador Bridge*. Congressional Democrats (see attached) are adding their voice to the situation, while other members of Congress are now calling for an investigation in to GoFundMe.

Articles out of DC-centric outlets quote DHS warning police about trucker protests at the March 1 State of the Union too. POLITICO headlines this week include, *“Trudeau’s own party is starting to turn on him over COVID restrictions”*. Commentary pieces abound -- in today’s Washington Post, *“The American right uses truckers to import right-wing fury into Canada”* and in The Hill, *“Canadian truckers’ convoy: American spinoff or domestic cascade?”*

Local public reaction: WSHDC-managed Consular Contact Centre is reporting an increased number of emails and phone calls from members of the public across the US expressing views on the protest. It appears there is a coordinated message campaign using a generic template that expresses support for the protest and criticizes the Canadian government for “human rights violations being carried out against lawful and peaceful protestors by federal, provincial and municipal officials in Ottawa and elsewhere.” No media pick-up of this campaign so far.

Abbreviated Articles

White House worried about Ambassador Bridge blockade disrupting auto production

The Detroit News, Melissa Nann Burke and Riley Beggin, 9 February 2022

The White House said Wednesday it’s “watching very closely” the blockade of the Ambassador Bridge by protesters in Canada, stressing the risk it poses to disrupting auto production, agricultural exports and to workers who need to cross the border.

Automakers cut production as Canadian truckers block deliveries across key border bridge to protest vaccine mandate

CNBC News, Michael Wayland, 10 February 2022

Canadian truck drivers blocking the nation's busiest border bridge between the U.S. and Canada in protest of that country's Covid-19 vaccine mandate are now disrupting North American manufacturing, especially among automakers.

Key U.S.-Canada border crossing blocked by truckers as Covid protest spreads

NBC News, Chantal Da Silva, 9 February

The busiest border crossing between Canada and the United States was still partially blocked Wednesday as a major protest against Covid-19 rules spread beyond Ottawa, the Canadian capital, where it has caused havoc for nearly two weeks.

Truck blockade at US-Canadian border shuts auto plants

Associated Press, Rob Gillies, 10 February 2022

The truck blockade by Canadians protesting the country's COVID-19 restrictions is tightening the screws on the auto industry, forcing Ford, General Motors and other car companies to shut down plants or otherwise reduce production on both sides of the U.S. border.

DHS bulletin warns trucker convoy could disrupt Super Bowl Sunday

CNN, Geneva Sands, 9 February 2022

The Department of Homeland Security is warning law enforcement across the country that a convoy of truckers protesting Covid-19 vaccine mandates, similar to recent protests in Ottawa, Canada, could soon begin in the US -- with the potential to affect Sunday's Super Bowl in the Los Angeles area and cause other disruptions.

Full Articles

White House worried about Ambassador Bridge blockade disrupting auto production

The Detroit News, Melissa Nann Burke and Riley Beggin, 9 February 2022

The White House said Wednesday it's "watching very closely" the blockade of the Ambassador Bridge by protesters in Canada, stressing the risk it poses to disrupting auto production, agricultural exports and to workers who need to cross the border.

More: What to know about the traffic delays at Ambassador Bridge, trucker protest over COVID mandate

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said the administration is coordinating with and in close touch with Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, auto companies, Customs and Border Protection officials, as well as Canadian counterparts to monitor the situation.

"The Ambassador Bridge is Canada's busiest link to the United States and accounts for about 25% of trade between the two countries," Psaki said, "and so the blockade poses a risk to supply chains for the auto industry because the bridge is a key conduit for motor vehicles components and parts."

Protests in Canada have prompted closures at the Ambassador Bridge since Monday, causing headaches for commercial drivers and traffic on Michigan roadways. As of Wednesday afternoon, the border was open to U.S.-bound traffic but closed to Canadian-bound travel.

The city of Windsor said about 100 people are protesting at the bridge Wednesday. In Ottawa, demonstrations staged by the Freedom Truck Convoy have shut down parts of the capital city for more than 10 days, with protesters demanding vaccine mandates and COVID-19 restrictions be lifted.

White House homeland security adviser Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall convened a meeting about the Ambassador Bridge's blockade on Wednesday, Psaki said.

"The President is focused on this and we are working very closely with the team at DHS, with Canadian officials and others to do everything we can to alleviate the impact," Psaki said.

White House officials are communicating with automakers about what auto parts coming from Canada could be delayed due to the disruption at the border crossing. They are also tracking potential disruptions to U.S. agricultural exports from Michigan into Canada, Psaki said.

She noted that Customs and Border officials have worked with Canadian counterparts to re-route traffic from the Ambassador Bridge to the Blue Water Bridge.

"There's still a lengthy delay, but it is enabling some of these trucks and transports to get through," Psaki said. "We're working to ensure there's movement."

She noted they opened all nine commercial lanes including a fast lane at the bridge to process diverted traffic.

But protests had been threatened for Wednesday in Sarnia on the Canadian side of the bridge, according to media reports.

"We support peaceful protest, but we have concerns when those protests turn violent," Psaki said.

"And certainly I think it's important for everyone in Canada and the United States to understand what the potential impact of this blockage is on workers, on the supply chain and that is where we are most focused."

John Walsh, president and CEO of the Michigan Manufacturers Association, told The Detroit News his organization is fielding questions and concerns from its members and lobbying elected officials for a resolution.

"As an association, we've been in contact with our senators, as well as with the governor," he said. "She's been working hard with the Biden administration to convey the importance of getting this resolved and hopefully bringing some pressure on the Canadian government."

If a resolution is not reached quickly, Walsh is worried factory shutdowns and temporary layoffs could begin within the next few days because of the manufacturing industry's reliance on a just-in-time supply model.

Several lawmakers on Capitol Hill said they were monitoring the protests and reaching out to U.S. Homeland Security officials Wednesday.

The onus is on Canada to determine a solution to the strain because the protests are challenging a Canadian policy, said Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Lansing, even as the supply chain disruptions impact Michigan and the U.S. as a whole.

Whitmer and the Canadian government are working on easing the strain, she added, including having some of the nurses working in hospitals on either side of the border stay overnight rather than commute.

"It's a complicated situation. ... It's hospital personnel, it's auto supply chain, it's many things," she said. "But ultimately, the Canadian government has to decide how they're going to respond."

Rep. Andy Levin, D-Bloomfield Township, said the situation presents a "very, very serious" potential impediment to what's already a delicate supply chain.

"I trust that the Canadian authorities will not treat this as simply a local police matter of Windsor, Ontario or Ottawa," Levin said.

"These are obviously protests about national policy, and we need to find a way to afford people — truckers and everybody else — the right to protest without undermining the economy, causing more supply chain problems, or adding to inflationary pressures."

Sen. Gary Peters, D-Bloomfield Township, said his office is looking into ways to alleviate the congestion, including working with the Canadian government.

"We're clearly very worried about the backup because trade is just so integral to our economy and the Canadian economy," Peters said.

He declined to weigh in on the vaccine mandate that the truckers are protesting.

"I would hope the Canadian government could work it out as quickly as possible," Peters said.

Rep. Elissa Slotkin, D-Holly, noted the conversations happening between the Canadians and the White House and with U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

"They found a way to effectively protest. I would not be shocked if we saw those kinds of protests in the United States because they have been so effective," Slotkin said.

"But the truth is there is cargo that needs to get through, and so I'm not sure what we can do to get some sort of agreement to allow traffic to go back. But I'm hoping that the Canadian government informs us quickly that they've said 'uncle' and they're going to do something to get us back to full health."

A "silver lining" of the situation, she added, is that more people are realizing that Michigan is where one-fourth of U.S.-Canadian road trade crosses and "recognizing what Michigan is to our economy."

Automakers cut production as Canadian truckers block deliveries across key border bridge to protest vaccine mandate

CNBC News, Michael Wayland, 10 February 2022

Canadian truck drivers blocking the nation's busiest border bridge between the U.S. and Canada in protest of that country's Covid-19 vaccine mandate are now disrupting North American manufacturing, especially among automakers.

The White House on Wednesday said it was monitoring the problem "very closely." Government officials have warned if the so-called Freedom Convoy blockade is prolonged, it could worsen supply chain problems, not just for the automotive industry but also for the medical and agriculture sectors among others.

The blockade is entering its fourth day on the Ambassador Bridge, which links Detroit, Mich., and Windsor, Ontario. The route accounts for a quarter of goods traded between the U.S. and Canada.

"The blockade poses a risk to supply chains for the auto industry because the bridge is a key conduit for motor vehicles components and parts," White House press secretary Jen Psaki told reporters at a briefing Wednesday. "We're also tracking potential disruptions to U.S. agricultural exports from Michigan into Canada."

Psaki said the White House is in close contact with Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, U.S. Customs and Border Protection authorities, as well as Canadian officials and auto companies. They are

attempting to find alternative cross-border routes and alleviate the impact on U.S. production and motorists who use the bridge to get to work.

"We're very focused on this. The president is focused on this," Psaki said.

Auto production

The blockade exacerbates an already tumultuous time for auto production, as companies continue to grapple with a prolonged semiconductor chip shortage that has caused sporadic closures of plants over the past year.

GM spokesman Dan Flores on Thursday confirmed the first shift at its Lansing Delta Township assembly plant in Michigan would be cut due to the problem. A second shift was cut Wednesday, he said.

Ford is running an engine plant in Windsor and an assembly plant in Oakville, Ontario, on a reduced schedule, spokeswoman Kelli Felker said Thursday morning. It follows similar actions by the company Wednesday due to the problem, including a shutdown of the engine facility,

"This interruption on the Detroit-Windsor bridge hurts customers, autoworkers, suppliers, communities and companies on both sides of the border," Ford said in a statement. "We hope this situation is resolved quickly, because it could have widespread impact on all automakers in the U.S. and Canada."

Ford had already made significant cuts to production this week at several North American plants due to the chips shortage.

Toyota on Wednesday said it would not be able to manufacture anything at three Canadian plants for the rest of this week due to parts shortages, the Associated Press reported. A statement attributed the problem to supply chain, weather and pandemic-related challenges, but the shutdowns came just days after the blockade began Monday.

Stellantis, formerly Fiat Chrysler, cut shifts short Wednesday at its minivan plant in Windsor, according to local media reports. The company did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Canadian protests

The blockade on the large international suspension bridge is one of a growing number of protests in Canada by the trucking industry.

Protesters have also been blocking the border crossing at Coutts, Alberta, for a week and a half, and more than 400 trucks have been in downtown Ottawa, Canada's capital, in a protest that began late last month, according to the Associated Press.

Truckers are protesting a rule that took effect Jan. 15 requiring those entering Canada to be fully vaccinated. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has shown no sign of easing the country's restrictions, according to media reports.

François Laporte, president of Teamsters Canada, which represents over 55,000 professional drivers, including 15,000 long-haul truck drivers, has condemned the protests, saying they do not represent the 90% of drivers who are vaccinated.

"We firmly believe in the right to protest government policies and voice a wide array of opinions, but what is happening in Ottawa has done more harm to Teamsters members, be they truck drivers who were trying to deliver their loads, or hotel, restaurant and health-care workers who were intimidated, abused or prevented from accessing their workplaces, by several protesters," he said in a statement earlier this week.

Key U.S.-Canada border crossing blocked by truckers as Covid protest spreads

NBC News, Chantal Da Silva, 9 February

The busiest border crossing between Canada and the United States was still partially blocked Wednesday as a major protest against Covid-19 rules spread beyond Ottawa, the Canadian capital, where it has caused havoc for nearly two weeks.

Dubbed the "Freedom Convoy," the demonstration has brought chaos to Ottawa since late last month. But this week, as Canadian officials expressed growing dismay at the disruption, it threatened to spread well beyond the country's borders.

The prospect of an economic impact in the United States came after the truckers won support from Republican politicians, including former President Donald Trump, and as similar convoys protesting coronavirus regulations emerged in Europe and elsewhere.

Aerial footage showed Ambassador Bridge, which connects Detroit and Windsor and carries around 27 percent of all trade between the U.S. and Canada, congested with trucks backed up along the crossing Tuesday. It is unclear how many of those trucks were participating in the demonstration and how many had simply been blocked from moving forward.

Police had asked drivers to avoid the area, which has seen traffic clogged by protesters since Monday. U.S.-bound lanes reopened Tuesday, but as of early Wednesday morning lanes going into Canada remained partially closed, according to the Canada Border Services Agency's website.

Canadian officials have warned of the potential for economic fallout, with Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino calling the bridge "one of the most important border crossings in the world."

On Tuesday, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said in a news briefing it was "clear these disruptions have broadened in scope beyond the vaccine requirement implementation."

"We are, of course, in touch with our Canadian counterparts" on the blockade, she said.

The blockade is the latest development in a saga that has seen hundreds of truckers converge on Canada's capital, blocking city streets, blaring their horns and disrupting daily life in the Canadian capital.

The Ottawa Police Service announced Tuesday that at least 23 people had been arrested in connection with "unlawful demonstrations" related to the trucker protest. They said a total of at least 85 investigations had been opened into the demonstration, including alleged hate crimes, property damage and theft.

Police have also issued tickets and sought to cut off truckers' access to fuel as part of a crackdown to end the protest.

The demonstration initially began in opposition to vaccination mandates for truckers crossing the U.S.-Canada border, but its focus quickly shifted to broader issues with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberal government and coronavirus measures imposed across the country.

Pandemic restrictions enforced in parts of Canada have been far stricter than in the U.S., but Canadians have largely backed the measures. Some provinces, including Saskatchewan, Quebec and Alberta, are moving to lift Covid measures.

Trudeau has denounced protesters' tactics, saying the chaos "has to stop" during an emergency debate in Parliament on Monday night.

Mendicino, the public safety minister, said: "Most Canadians understand there is a difference between being tired and fatigued with the pandemic and crossing into some other universe."

In recent days the protest movement appears to have spread well beyond Canada's borders.

In New Zealand, scores of people protesting vaccine and mask mandates joined a convoy to the capital, Wellington, on Tuesday. A number of demonstrators could also be seen carrying "Trump 2024" flags.

The country has imposed strict restrictions during the course of the pandemic, reporting just 53 deaths from the virus among its population of around 5 million.

As some grow weary of the restrictions, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has said the country will end its quarantine requirements for travelers entering the country as it reopens its borders.

In France, a convoy appeared to be making its way from Nice toward Paris to protest coronavirus rules.

Some members of the convoy were also expected to join a protest in Brussels, where organizers have said on social media they expect convoys from across Europe to gather for what they have billed as a major demonstration.

Truck blockade at US-Canadian border shuts auto plants

Associated Press, Rob Gillies, 10 February 2022

The truck blockade by Canadians protesting the country's COVID-19 restrictions is tightening the screws on the auto industry, forcing Ford, General Motors and other car companies to shut down plants or otherwise reduce production on both sides of the U.S. border.

The bumper-to-bumper demonstration by the self-proclaimed Freedom Truck Convoy entered its fourth day Thursday at the Ambassador Bridge connecting Windsor, Ontario, to Detroit, disrupting the flow of auto parts and other products between the two countries.

Meanwhile, U.S. authorities braced for the possibility of similar truck-convoy protests across the United States, and authorities in Paris and Belgium banned road blockades to head off disruptions there too.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security said in a bulletin to local and state law enforcement agencies that it has received reports that truckers are planning to "potentially block roads in major metropolitan cities" in a protest against vaccine mandates and other issues.

DHS said the convoy could begin in Southern California as early as this weekend, possibly disrupting traffic around the Super Bowl, and reach Washington in March in time for the State of the Union, according to a copy of Tuesday's bulletin obtained by The Associated Press. It said that the protest could be disruptive and tie up traffic but that there have been no calls for violence.

The ban on road blockades in Europe and the threat of prison and heavy fines were likewise prompted by online chat groups in France that have been calling on drivers to converge on Paris starting Friday night and to continue on to Brussels on Monday.

The Ambassador Bridge is the busiest U.S.-Canadian border crossing, carrying 25% of all trade between the two countries, and the effects of the blockade there were felt rapidly.

NATHAN DENETTE, THE CANADIAN PRESS VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

Firefighters put out a burning barrel fire as truckers and supporters blocked access from the Ambassador Bridge, linking Detroit and Windsor, in a protest against COVID-19 vaccine mandates and restrictions in Windsor, Ontario, on Wednesday, Feb. 9, 2022.

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TORONTO — The truck blockade by Canadians protesting the country's COVID-19 restrictions is tightening the screws on the auto industry, forcing Ford, General Motors and other car companies to shut down plants or otherwise reduce production on both sides of the U.S. border.

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On the U.S. side, GM canceled the second shift on Wednesday and the first shift on Thursday at its SUV factory outside Lansing, Michigan.

Toyota said it will not be able to manufacture anything at three Canadian plants for the rest of the week because of parts shortages. In a statement, the automaker blamed supply chain disruptions, weather and pandemic-related problems, but the shutdowns came just days after the blockade began Monday.

Honda said that its assembly plant in Alliston, Ontario, north of Toronto, had to suspend production on one assembly line on Wednesday, but that it was back in operation Thursday.

Stellantis, formerly Fiat Chrysler, said all of its North American factories were running Thursday, but shortages because of the blockade forced it to shorten shifts at several plants.

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer urged Canadian authorities to quickly resolve the standoff.

"My message is simple: reopen traffic on the bridge," she said in a statement. "The blockade is having a significant impact on Michigan's working families who are just trying to do their jobs. Our communities and automotive, manufacturing, and agriculture businesses are feeling the effects. It's hitting paychecks and production lines. That is unacceptable."

Hundreds of demonstrators in trucks have also paralyzed the streets of downtown Ottawa for almost two weeks, and dozens more have been blocking the border crossing at Coutts, Alberta, opposite Montana, decrying vaccine mandates for truckers and other COVID-19 restrictions and railing against Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Protesters also began a new blockade at Emerson, Manitoba, across the border from North Dakota.

The convoy has been promoted and cheered on by many Fox News personalities and attracted support from the likes of former President Donald Trump and Texas Sen. Ted Cruz.

Windsor Mayor Drew Dilkens said Wednesday that police had not removed the protesters there for fear of inflaming the situation. But he added: "We're not going to let this happen for a prolonged period of time."

As of Wednesday, the demonstration involved 50 to 74 vehicles and about 100 protesters, police said. Ottawa police said Thursday they were "able to negotiate for a dozen more trucks to leave" downtown and said 10 others left, but the city warned about traffic disruptions because of a new demonstration at the Ottawa airport. Police also said a deliberate effort to flood its 911 line with calls was underway.

To get around the blockade and into Canada, truckers in the Detroit area have had to drive 70 miles north to Port Huron, Michigan, and cross the Blue Water Bridge, where there was a 4½-hour delay leaving the U.S.

While protesters have been calling for Trudeau's removal, most of the restrictive measures around the country have been put in place by provincial governments. Those include requirements that people show proof-of-vaccination passports to enter restaurants, gyms, movie theaters and sporting events.

Many provinces announced plans this week to remove or relax those restrictions after the surge in omicron cases crested in the country.

Truck blockade at US-Canadian border shuts auto plants

Associated Press, Rob Gillies, 10 February 2022

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Many provinces announced plans this week to remove or relax those restrictions after the surge in omicron cases crested in the country.

Pandemic restrictions have been far stricter in Canada than in the U.S., but Canadians have largely supported them. Canada's COVID-19 death rate is one-third that of the U.S.

Canada's opposition Conservative Party began calling for the blockades to end after its lawmakers initially supported the protests.

"The economy you want to see reopen is hurting. Farmers, manufacturers, small businesses and families are suffering," interim Conservative leader Candice Bergen said in Parliament.

DHS bulletin warns trucker convoy could disrupt Super Bowl Sunday

CNN, Geneva Sands, 9 February 2022

The Department of Homeland Security is warning law enforcement across the country that a convoy of truckers protesting Covid-19 vaccine mandates, similar to recent protests in Ottawa, Canada, could soon begin in the US -- with the potential to affect Sunday's Super Bowl in the Los Angeles area and cause other disruptions.

A DHS bulletin issued on Tuesday to state and local officials, obtained by CNN, said the agency "has received reports of truck drivers planning to potentially block roads in major metropolitan cities in the United States in protest of, among other things, vaccine mandates for truck drivers."

The DHS warning was first reported by Yahoo News.

"The convoy will potentially begin in California as early as mid-February and arrive in Washington, DC, as late as mid-March, potentially impacting the Super Bowl LVI scheduled for 13 February and the State of the Union Address scheduled for 1 March," the bulletin said.

"While there are currently no indications of planned violence, if hundreds of trucks converge in a major metropolitan city, the potential exists to severely disrupt transportation, federal government operations, commercial facilities, and emergency services through gridlock and potential counterprotests," the bulletin continued.

A DHS spokesperson told CNN in a statement that the department "is tracking reports of a potential convoy that may be planning to travel to several U.S. cities. We have not observed specific calls for violence within the United States associated with this convoy, and are working closely with our federal, state, and local partners to continuously assess the threat environment and keep our communities safe."

A federal law enforcement official told CNN that early last week, authorities began seeing calls on a variety of online forums for the events in Ottawa to expand into the US. The official said that law enforcement and security officials guarding the Super Bowl in Inglewood, California, are preparing for any possible disruptions.

For nearly two weeks, Canadian truckers have been protesting a new rule that requires them to be fully vaccinated against Covid-19 or face a two-week quarantine in their homes after they return across the US-Canadian border. Others have joined to rally against mask mandates, lockdowns, restrictions on gatherings and other Covid-19 preventative efforts in the country.

Tensions stemming from protests have simmered to the point that traffic at key US transit points has ground to a stop and a judge has temporarily banned demonstrators in the nation's capital from using horns.

DHS said it has worked for more than a year to support security measures around the Super Bowl and dedicated more than 500 individuals from the department to assist. The agency says it has also worked with federal, state and local partners to strengthen security around the US Capitol.

President Joe Biden is set to deliver the annual State of the Union address to Congress on March 1.

From: Lambo, Pam -WSHDC -WS -PA

Sent: February 9, 2022 5:37 PM

To: Loken, Martin -WSHDC -GR <Martin.Loken@international.gc.ca>; McIntyre, Graeme -WSHDC -GR <Graeme.McIntyre@international.gc.ca>; Holmes, Michael -WSHDC -GR <Michael.Holmes@international.gc.ca>; Maisonneuve, Mélanie -WSHDC -BF <Melanie.Maisonneuve@international.gc.ca>; Kiameh, Madeleine -WSHDC -BF <Madeleine.Kiameh@international.gc.ca>; Fanning, Tammy -WSHDC -BF <Tammy.Fanning@international.gc.ca>; Stendardo, Frank -WSHDC -TD <Frank.Stendardo@international.gc.ca>; 'Arseneau, Michel' <michel.arseneau@rcmp-grc.gc.ca>; 'McGraw, Mathews' <mathews.mcgraw@rcmp-grc.gc.ca>; Gordon, Sean -WSHDC -PL <Sean.Gordon@international.gc.ca>

Cc: Baird, Katherine -WSHDC -DHOM/CDMA <Katherine.Baird@international.gc.ca>; Grant, Heather -WSHDC -WS <Heather.Grant@international.gc.ca>; Bélanger, Jérôme -WSHDC -GR <Jerome.Belanger@international.gc.ca>; *WSHDC-Media Relations <D-WSHDC-MediaRelations@international.gc.ca>; Parsons, Alanna -NGB <Alanna.Parsons@international.gc.ca>; Barratt, Adam -WSHDC -WS <Adam.Barratt@international.gc.ca>; Boudreau, Wendy -WSHDC -WS <Wendy.Boudreau@international.gc.ca>; Maron, Stefano -WSHDC -WS <Stefano.Maron@international.gc.ca>; Fisher, Dani -MNPLS -GR <dani.fisher@international.gc.ca>; Connell, Christine -DTROT -GR <Christine.Connell@international.gc.ca>; Denter, Christian -NGB <Christian.Denter@international.gc.ca>

Subject: 2022-02-09: U.S. media roll-up: "Freedom Convoy" Protest

ATTACHED UPDATES:

Roll-up of US media articles

Twitter snapshot

Q&A with Jen Psaki at today's WH press briefing

CBSA and RCMP media lines (provided by PCO)

From: Lambo, Pam -WSHDC -WS -PA

Sent: February 9, 2022 10:01 AM

To: Loken, Martin -WSHDC -GR <Martin.Loken@international.gc.ca>; McIntyre, Graeme -WSHDC -GR <Graeme.McIntyre@international.gc.ca>; Holmes, Michael -WSHDC -GR <Michael.Holmes@international.gc.ca>; Maisonneuve, Mélanie -WSHDC -BF <Melanie.Maisonneuve@international.gc.ca>; Kiameh, Madeleine -WSHDC -BF <Madeleine.Kiameh@international.gc.ca>; Fanning, Tammy -WSHDC -BF <Tammy.Fanning@international.gc.ca>; Stendardo, Frank -WSHDC -TD <Frank.Stendardo@international.gc.ca>; 'Arseneau, Michel' <michel.arseneau@rcmp-grc.gc.ca>; 'McGraw, Mathews' <mathews.mcgraw@rcmp-grc.gc.ca>; Gordon, Sean -WSHDC -PL <Sean.Gordon@international.gc.ca>

Cc: Baird, Katherine -WSHDC -DHOM/CDMA <Katherine.Baird@international.gc.ca>; Grant, Heather -WSHDC -WS <Heather.Grant@international.gc.ca>; Bélanger, Jérôme -WSHDC -GR <Jerome.Belanger@international.gc.ca>; *WSHDC-Media Relations <D-WSHDC-MediaRelations@international.gc.ca>; Parsons, Alanna -NGB <Alanna.Parsons@international.gc.ca>; Barratt, Adam -WSHDC -WS <Adam.Barratt@international.gc.ca>; Boudreau, Wendy -WSHDC -WS <Wendy.Boudreau@international.gc.ca>; Maron, Stefano -WSHDC -WS <Stefano.Maron@international.gc.ca>; Fisher, Dani -MNPLS -GR <dani.fisher@international.gc.ca>; Connell, Christine -DTROT -GR <Christine.Connell@international.gc.ca>; Denter, Christian -NGB <Christian.Denter@international.gc.ca>

Subject: RE: U.S. media roll-up: "Freedom Convoy" Protest

Attached is the excerpt on the protest from yesterday's WH press briefing. Note that there are three unique Q&A exchanges, and we believe that the last Q was from TVA's Richard Latendresse.

From: Lambo, Pam -WSHDC -WS -PA
Sent: February 8, 2022 6:33 PM
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Subject: U.S. media roll-up: "Freedom Convoy" Protest

In addition to the attached US media roll-up, note that the protest was raised at today's WH press briefing during which Jen Psaki was asked about the "Canadian trucker protest" that shut down the Ambassador Bridge last night and if the Administration had a plan to prevent blockages on the Michigan side of the bridge. Psaki answered that while the Administration supports freedom of expression and speech, the protest has extended far beyond the vaccine mandate for truckers. She noted that the Administration is in touch with their "Canadian counterparts" but she did not have any updates on specific steps the US government is taking. She was also asked if the Administration was worried about American truckers who have been inspired by the protests in Canada and are planning to launch a similar protest in Washington, D.C in March. Psaki responded that she would check on potential security measures being taken in DC, but noted that the trucker vaccine mandate is not negatively impacting the movement of goods. We are waiting on the official WH transcript and will circulate it once received.

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